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European Trash Cinema



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Front Cover
Laura Gemser looks on as cannibals
TRAP THEM & KILL THEM

Back Cover
Brett Halsey tries to make it
4 TIMES THAT NIGHT

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RANT

Some readers think I do this magazine strictly for them. If I waver at all from their preconceived notions of what I should cover, well, I'm a failure and if I don't shape up, they'll spend their money elsewhere. When they tell me this, they are always surprised by my reply, which is, "Fine, go ahead, here's your money now leave me the FUCK alone." They just don't get it. I'm doing this magazine for me. It's that simple. If there are 5, 500, or 5000 people who also want to read it, that's great, but it isn't going to change the way this magazine is put together. I don't have to satisfy advertisers, outside owners or even a huge commercial audience. [God, I shake with laughter every time a mainstream horror mag has to run an interview with some asshole who is making a piece of shit like MORTAL COMBAT. To have to print said individual's pronouncement that this film isn't really about SPFX, but is more of a relationship-type film, just brings tears to my eyes!] If I'm happy, ETC continues. If this ever changes, then ETC stops. Even if I have to return to the chintzy, cheapo newsletter days to get an issue of ETC out, then I will go ahead and do just that. Some would think that's sad, but guess what, I DON'T FUCKING CARE! I'm doing this for the LOVE of it and no other reason. For those of you who can't fathom this concept (and fortunately, there aren't many out there), I pity you.

SHOOTIN' THE SHIT



Before I get into the meat of this issue's column (which includes 3 pages of film reviews after the Publications Received section), let me SINGLE out Donna Lucas as the one who has made this issue's interiors look as good as the front and back covers. She went out of her way to give the magazine a complete makeover and it made a Hell of a difference (so if Tim and Donna are a little late with Video Watchdog, cut them some slack). I would also like to lay to rest any fears that the Giallo Book might be cancelled now that I'm producing ETC by myself. I have taken on Peter Blumenstock as both a co-writer and co-publisher so no need to worry. Over 175 films will be covered and it should see print in early '96. Finally, you can add soundtrack CD #4 from



Lucertola to the other 3 (see inside front cover) that I have for sale. This one features the scores to 3 Jesus Franco films, **THE DEVIL CAME FROM AKASAWA**, **VAMPYROS LESBOS** and **SHE KILLS IN ECSTASY**. The cost is \$22 in US and Canada and \$25 everywhere else.

OK, as you can see from the surrounding video box art, Redemption has unleashed its latest attack on decency and good taste. As there is only one Jezebel title this month, I'll get to it first. **THE ART OF LOVE** is one of Walerian Borowczyk's more obscure works and sad to say, for me, it could have just as well stay that way. It takes all of Borowczyk's worst attributes (pretentiousness, frantic camerawork, and a narrator who just won't shutup) and magnifies them tenfold. I'm sorry, but give me the supposed dull softcore couplings of Joe D'Amato anyway. It's not all bad however, as Borowczyk's lover, Marina Pierro is the star and the way his camera lovingly stares at her butt, you would think you're watching a Tinto Brass film. Next up is **BLACK CANDLES**, yet another disappointment (though this is no means Redemption's fault as their print of the film, like everything else they put out, is flawless). For years I've been seeing the press material for the film (admittedly, I

should know better than to trust the marketing department!) which had me expecting the motherlode of all Spanish horror films. Well, imagine my surprise when I finally see the damn thing and it's nothing more than a softcore sex film with little horror. Now, the fact that the star, Helga Line, spends vast amounts of time huck naked helps, but it still ranks as a disappointment. Still kudos to Redemption for finally making it available. Finally are two jewels in the nun-sploitation crown of films with **NUNS OF ST. ARCHANGEL** and **DIARY OF A CLOISTERED NUN**. The first is available here as **SISTERS OF SATAN**, but the latter is a better film anyway. Suzy Kendall is the wicked Mother Superior and Eleonora Giorgi is the poor, mistreated (whips, lesbian gropings, etc.) "virgin".



PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

DIVA CINE SEX STAR & BIZARRE CINEMA—101 & 157 pages, Glittering Images, Via Giovanni da Montorsoli, 37/39, 50142 Firenze, Italy. You want an endless stream of photos of every Sexploitation actress from the fifties through the seventies? Here's a microscopic listing of the starlets pertinent to the readers of ETC—Barbara Steele, Barbara Bouchet, Rosalba Neri, Rita Calderoni, Soledad Miranda, Femi Benussi, and dozens more. This is Glittering Images' best publication yet. Bizarre Cinema will be for fans of nudie cuties as profiles of directors (Russ Meyer, David Friedman, Doris Wishman, Harry Novak, etc.) and their favorite starlets (Erica Gavin, Uschi Digart, Kitten Natividad, etc.) "fill" out the pages.

DREADFUL PLEASURES #8/9—\$3.00, 32 pages, Mike Accomando, 650 Prospect Avenue, Fairview, NJ 07022. Mike has recently upgraded the look of DP to include professional layout and slick covers. DP covers the films of the seventies and features essays, reviews and filmographies pertaining to the cinema of 20 years ago.

ECCO #20—\$4.00, 48 pages, Kill-Gore Productions, P.O.Box 65742, Washington, DC 20035. Published bi-annually (unfortunately), ECCO remains untouched with its mixture of intelligence and exploitation. A must buy, this issue features an interview with Joel (BLOODSUCKING FREAKS) Reed and OLGA star, Audrey Campbell.

FLESH AND BLOOD #4—\$10, 60 pages, Harvey Fenton, P.O. Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU, UK. Currently one of the finest film publications in the world, Harvey has put out his best issue yet. There are color covers (inside and out), plus 4 interior pages that will knock your eyeballs out. A ton of film reviews, a continuing, detailed overview of British Horror pictures (the years 1975 through 1977 are covered), an interview with Norman (INSEMINOID) Warren, and much more.

GIALLO PAGES #4—\$9.00, 52 pages, John Martin, P.O.Box 134, West PIDO Nottingham, NG7 7BW, UK. Essential reading as always, GP #4 keeps the faith. The usual plethora of reviews, interviews with Enzo Castellari, Simon Boswell, and Richard Stanley, a great report on Fantafestival 94 by director Mariano Bano, and (wait for it) much more. The sad news is that Giallo Pages will become an annual affair in the future.

NAKED EYE #1—\$9.00, 52 pages, Chris Gallant, P.O.Box 339, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1GH UK. Chris has taken a quantum leap with Naked Eye. His past zine, Goblin, contained serious discussions on Italian Horror

and Exploitation films. With his new publication, both layout (including interior color pages) and the films he discusses have moved up a few notches. Chris is still covering World Cinema, but it's no longer the staples of Euro-Trash. Instead he discusses EXOTICA, A SHOCK TO THE CINEMA, EYES WITHOUT A FACE and other obscure foreign art cinema.

NECRONOMICON #7—\$10, 60 pages, Andrew Black, 15 Jubilee Rd., Newton, Abbot, Devon TQ12 1LB UK. Here's another excellent publication that has switched to an annual production schedule. Contents include many detailed reviews (5 DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON, HORROR EXPRESS, THE KEEP, HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK and others), a Lima Romy appreciation and other essays add up to a killer package.

ONE SHOT PRODUCTIONS: LINDA HAYDEN: DRACULA AND BEYOND \$7.00, Kevin Collins, 2020 East 37th St., Brooklyn, NY 11234 (in Europe write to Tim Groves, 118 High Street, Eastleigh, Hants SO50 5LR UK). I'll make this real simple: BUY THIS, NOW!

SAM FULLER: FILM IS A BATTLEGROUND by Lee Server, \$32.50 (+\$3.00 postage), 188 pages, McFarland & Co., Box 611 (Highway 88N), Jefferson, NC 28640-0611. McFarland has always published excellent film books and this one is no exception. The book consists of a critical overview, interview (totaling 50 pages!), and complete filmography on an American filmmaker more appreciated in Europe than his own country (though this book is a step in the right direction). Fuller is a tough ol' bird yet Server's interview gets him to reveal not only his technical expertise, but his personal side as well. I also appreciated the discussion of Fuller's career as it put his many talents into perspective. If you have the least bit of interest in Fuller's career (and if you don't, shame on you), seek this one out.

SLEAZE MERCHANTS by John McCarty, \$16.95, \$4, Martin's Griffin, 175 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY 10010. You know Euro-Trash must be making headway in America if a stuid, predictable "critic" like John McCarty includes a chapter in his latest work on Jesus Franco. Of course he didn't write it, we're not that far enough along in the revolution. 15 filmmakers are covered including Sam Katzman, Ed Wood, Jim Wynorski, and Fred O. Ray among others. Most of the articles and interviews aren't by McCarty (which is a plus) but his name is the only one used on the cover. It's nice to know there are sleaze merchants in the book business too. Finally, I have to single out the book's layout and photo reproduction. It really looks like shit!

A Fistful of Reviews

BLOOD DELIRIUM

(1988) Directed by
Sergio Bergonzelli

This is the type of film European Trash Cinema was created for. Goddamn it's trashy and vastly entertaining at the same time. It would also piss off the types who read *Sight & Sound* and believe Phil Hardy's *Encyclopedia of Horror Films* gives a rat's ass about its subject matter.

Seville, a concert pianist, hears her own voice from the future warning her about hidden dangers. Right away you know this is going to be a sleazy experience. Why else would Bergonzelli set up this scene with actress Brigitte Christensen running around topless? Hopefully not just to reveal her piss-poor boob job. Meanwhile, Charles San Simon (John Phillip Law) is an artist who lives for his wife Christine. Unfortunately, she kicks the bucket which causes Charles to fly into a rage. Conversely, San Simon's assistant, Herman's (Gordon Mitchell) reaction is one of horniness as he instantly starts groping her corpse. Simon's inspiration was his wife's piano playing and with her dead, he has trouble painting. So he decides to dig up her worm eaten corpse, plop it in front of the piano and play tapes of her past performances (Herman is excited about this as well, but for all the wrong reasons!). You just know Simon is less than inspired when he remarks, "I want to express ferment in evolution, but I don't know the first thing about evolution." No shit Sherlock.

When Herman kills a young girl he catches snooping around the castle, her blood is used by Simon to paint his next masterpiece, thus revitalizing his artistic ambitions. Meanwhile, Seville visits Simon to gaze at his paintings and son-of-a-bitch, she's the spitting image of his late wife. Simon instantly has her

play the piano and decides killing her and using the blood to paint with will help him finally realize his true genius. It doesn't quite work out that way as Seville's pony-tailed boyfriend arrives in time to kick-ass and escape with her in tow.

Director Sergio Bergonzelli (born August 25, 1924) only made one other horror film in his career (the similarly twisted **FOLDS OF THE FLESH**, 1970) which is a real shame as he obviously has a knack for the genre (even if it is totally off-kilter). Too bad he has spent the majority of his career making exploitation films (though rumors abound he has recently completed **BLOOD DELIRIUM 2**). John Phillip Law's performance redefines over-the-top! I've never seen him so hyper. A marvelously trashy performance, it's obvious he is having a lot of fun with the role. And then there's Gordon Mitchell. This veteran of Euro-Trash had to question how he ended up playing a necrophile at this stage of his career, but doesn't let it interfere with the fun. It ranks up there with his other great sleaze performances in **FRANKENSTEIN 80** and **THE CROSS OF THE 7 STONES**. Still in great shape (he started off in the Peplum genre), Mitchell (real name Charles Pendleton) even gets to run around with his shirt off.

The film is a true acid test for those on the fence about Euro-Trash cinema. If you watch it and are offended or bored by the film, go back to the safe haven of the mainstream. I'm sure *Sight & Sound* would welcome you back.

DELITTO PASSIONALE

(PASSIONATE CRIME, 1994)
Directed by Flavio Mogherini

For the first time in almost twenty years, director Flavio Mogherini (born March 23, 1924) returns to the

genre where he created his best film (**THE PAJAMA GIRL CASE**, 1978). While it's not nearly as well scripted as that film, **DELITTO PASSIONALE** contains a great cast and enough directorial flourishes to make one wish Mogherini hadn't waited so long to return to the domain of the Giallo. The real tragedy is that he won't have the opportunity to make another as he died shortly after completing this film.

Sonya leaves her crippled daughter at home while she rendezvous with her lover at a hotel. Later that night Sonya is shot to death in her own bed. It's at the funeral that we meet all of the likely suspects—Peter (Fabio Testi) her estranged husband, Tanya (Serena Grandi) her sister, and Julia (Florinda Bolkan) a business associate. The police inspector on the case (Paul Martignetti) is eager but somewhat of a blunderer as he conducts his investigation. What he discovers is that Peter is sexually involved with all the women at the wake and so naturally they are suspected of the murder. Killings continue as the inspector finally figures it out and arrests the least likely suspect.

Mogherini uses a lot of intricate visual styling (together with veteran cinematographer Luigi Kuveiller of **DEEP RED** fame) to foreshadow the events to come. The fact that the murderer uses a gun instead of a knife is also intrinsic to the plot and not just an attempt to be different. Serena Grandi as Tanya has matured as an actress and is quite convincing here. Fortunately, the well endowed Ms. Grandi doesn't mind appearing in a totally gratuitous love scene with Fabio Testi. Florinda Bolkan (one of President JFK's last lovers) unfortunately doesn't do much and looks like she's ready to be put on display at a wax museum.

The biggest disappointment is the musical score by Gianni Ferrio. Since the film is set in Hungary (and was, like Ruggero Deodato's **THE**

WASHING MACHINE also filmed there), Ferrio uses a lot of ethnic gypsy-like music (there's even a dancing bear in one scene!) or steals from his score to **THE BLOOD STAINED BUTTERFLY**. Coming from such a first class composer, one can only gripe about such a missed opportunity.

This is not the type of thriller to start off with if you're a newcomer to the genre, but if you sat through as many turkeys as I have, you'll most likely find quite a bit here to like.

HANSEL AND GRETEL

(*NON SI SEVIZANO I BAMBINI*, 1989)

Directed by
Giovanni Simonelli

Giovanni Simonelli is mainly known for scripting Action films and comedies, so it should come as no surprise that when it comes to making a horror film, he hasn't got a fucking clue. An awful movie in damn near every department, this one is reviewed strictly for the record.

Two children are kidnapped by an organization that uses them as prostitutes and when they are no longer effective in that role, sells their internal organs on the Black Market. Soon after the children are killed, the woman in charge of the operation (Brigitte Christensen from **BLOOD DELIRIUM**) is found drowned in her pool. A female cop assigned to the case (Elisabette Boaretto) tracks down the woman's heirs and soon has her hands full trying to unravel each of their untimely demises. Even though the spirit of each child appears right before the victim's death, it occurs by their own hand making them appear like suicides. The ending is total confusion, however the children's spirits appear to be appeased and they return to their graves.



DARK BAR

There's lots of gore, but it's so phony you won't care. Veteran actors appear in background parts (Paul Mueller, Maurice Poli and Ronald Russo) but are only going through the motions to collect a paycheck. With films like this, it's no wonder modern-day Italian Horror has fallen on hard times.

DARK BAR

(1988) Directed by
Stelio Fiorenza

Director Stelio Fiorenza (born March 18, 1945) has only directed 2 films in the last 10 years (his first was 1985's **LA PAROLA SEGRETA**). Based on this flaccid piece of shit, I can see why his career stalled out. He sets up the viewer for a perverse thriller but wimps out before you even reach the half-way point.

The film begins with Elizabeth (Elisabetta Boaretto), a beautiful woman and a former girlfriend

of Dario Argento) and centers on her rather sordid life-style. In the grand tradition of Alfred Hitchcock, she is killed just as the viewer becomes interested in her character. Emphasis is then shifted to her sister Anna (Marina Suma), a character who is not only less interesting, but rapidly gets on one's nerves as the film progresses. She slowly realizes that a former girlfriend (who is now blind) had gotten Elizabeth involved in a drug problem which led to her sister's murder by drug dealers.

That's it. A simple crime plot with characters you don't care about (Richard Hatch of Battlestar Galactica fame plays Anna's boyfriend) and don't want to spend 90 minutes with. Is there anything good about the film (besides the two lead actresses nude scenes)? No.

WELCOME TO SPRING BREAK

(1989) Directed by
Harry Kirkpatrick

If I didn't know that Umberto Lenzi was hiding behind the Harry Kirkpatrick pseudonym, I would have never guessed there was any Italian behind the camera involved in this one. This film (shot back-to-back with **HITCHER IN THE DARK**—the RV from that film has a cameo here) is such a clone of a U.S. production, that it accomplishes a self-fulfilling prophecy, destroying any unique ties to the Italian genre cinema. There are no Italian actors so it's shot with live sound. It was filmed at Ft. Lauderdale, Florida so no need for any Italian sound stage work. The only two reminders of the film's Euro-Trash origins are Claudio Simonetti's Goblin-esque score (available on the **FNT TRACKS CD**) and Antonio Climati's (direc-

tor of **SAVAGE MAN, SAVAGE BEAST**) razor sharp cinematography. So of course the film is a piece of shit.

Biker Edward "Diablo" Santer is electrocuted for the murder of Gail's sister. He claims he was set up by Police Chief Striker (John Saxon). Afterwards, teenagers are turning up dead, fried to a crisp. The mayor downplays the murders so as not to mess up the tourist season (Where the fuck have we seen this before?). Is Diablo back from the dead, is it the alcoholic doctor (played by alcoholic Michael Parks), the police chief (who has kinky chains and a dog collar in his trailer house), or is it Reverend Bates (whose daughter screws anything that moves)? If you can't figure it out before the film ends, you're already dead. The only thing of interest is the motorcycle from Hell's electric chair attachment.

BODY PUZZLE

(1992) Directed by
Lamberto Bava

With this film, Lamberto Bava (born April 3, 1944) can step out from under Dario Argento's shadow as he has made a film that far exceeds, in every way, his mentor's current work, **TRAUMA**. All the elements of thriller genre combine here to reinvigorate one's interest in the Modern Day Italian horror film.

Tracy (Joanna Pacula) is recovering from the trauma of both her brother and husband's recent death. As if that weren't enough, a serial killer is collecting body parts from his victims and leaving them in her refrigerator. The cop assigned to the case, Mike Levitt (Thomas Arana), is always a step or two behind the killer so that the body count begins to mount up as the film unspools. Plot twists are what makes this film unique so a long synopsis will only spoil it. Suffice it to say, you won't see the ending coming.

A lot of genre favorites appear in supporting parts such as Gianni Garko (more well known for his

many appearances as the Spaghetti Western hero **SARTANA**), Erika Blanc (who appeared in Mario Bava's **KILL BABY KILL** almost 30 years ago), and everyone's favorite victim, John Morghen (real name Giovanni Lombardo Radice who had his dick whacked off in Umberto Lenzi's **MAKE THEM DIE SLOWLY**). Quite gory in spots, a particularly shocking sequence involves a teacher to the blind having her eyes gouged out right in front of her sightless students! The only negative (and it's a minor one) is that the plot is a direct steal from Vincente Aranda's **EXQUISITE CORPSES**!

FOXY LADY

(1992) Directed by
George Raminto

If you're not a fan of the female form ala Russ Meyer's tastes, then this film is definitely not for you. Sergio Martino (here using a new pseudonym, George Raminto) continues to make contemporary thrillers with lots of sex and violence and a dash of class. In this film he exploits busty Debra Caprioglio (the late Klaus Kinski's last lover—what a way to go!) to the

max as he never misses a chance to have her strip and do the ol' bump and grind. Too bad about the plot which is as generic as you'll find in any American made erotic thriller.

Former policeman Mark Derrick (Steve Bond) is hired to assassinate a drug lord in South America. It turns out he was also responsible for the execution of Derrick's family and subsequent eviction from the force. As the ex-cop waits for the perfect opportunity to complete his contract, he ends up spying on his neighbor (the original Italian title, **SPIANDO MARINA**, translates as **SPYING ON MARINA**), Marina Valdez (Debra Caprioglio). Before you can say 1+1=1, they're doing the nasty on the hardwood floor. Of course no one is who they appear to be and the film ends in a lose-lose situation for everybody, but if you can hear the clichés, this is slick, trashy fun.

The entire reason for this film's existence is to expose Caprioglio's ample bustline and Martino does not disappoint. Whether she's involved with her rough trade boyfriend's S&M games or playing hide and seek with her pet boa constrictor, Caprioglio is for the most butt-naked. And for a film like this, that's all that truly matters.



A girl and her snake: Debra Caprioglio stars in **FOXY LADY**, here advertised under its original export title.

THE JOE D'AMATO INTERVIEW



Conducted by Thomas Schweer

Joe D'Amato

How did you get into the film business?

I've been working in the film business for 45 years. My father was a technician at a studio and I became assistant camera operator at the age of 15. Before that I worked as a cable transporter and electrician. Later on I became chief camera operator, director, producer... Nowadays I do everything.

So, you grew up in a family of artists?

It was more technical than artistic. For instance, my father started as a gaffer. My brother and son are also in the business, my son is a chief camera operator now.

Which film was your first as cameraman?

It was **PELLE DI BANDITO** which was shot in Sardinia. It deals with the gangster, Graziano Messina.

A political film?

No, not at all, it was very noncommercial and more of an art film.

*One of your first films as director was **DEATH SMILES ON A MURDERER** which starred Klaus*

Kinski. What was it like working with him?

As far as I can remember, I shot two or three films with him. He is a very talented and professional actor since he really gets into the characters he plays.

That's a new one! In the German press one always reads that nobody can work with him because he's extremely difficult.

It is probably like that today. I worked with him 16 years ago. He is a famous star now and that changes a man. Werner Herzog, who made many films with him, went through a lot of trouble with him. I think his film **AGUIRRE** is one of my all-time favorites.

*We have the impression you were influenced quite a bit by Dario Argento on **DEATH SMILES AT A MURDERER**.*

No, but I was influenced by Mario Bava since I didn't know anything about Argento then. But I learned a lot

This Interview originally appeared in Splatting Image #7, and was conducted by Thomas Schweer. Splatting Image is the leading German language film publication. It makes Cinefantastique look like shit.

from Bava when I worked for him as a photographer on **HERCULES IN THE CENTER OF THE WORLD** starring Christopher Lee. In the very early days I worked with his father Eugenio, who did the special effects on that film. I did the opening and closing credits for films. In those days the letters had to be cut out by hand and that was my job.

DEATH SMILES AT A MURDERER was very violent for its time.

Yes, I intended to shock the audience.

Was it a financial success?

No, not at all. Perhaps the audience wasn't ready for that type of film.

The film is very strange. It's like there was no script since you can't really follow the storyline.

Well, the script wasn't very good. I changed a lot during the filming, but there were still too many holes in the story.

Tell us about your method of cinematography. There are some interesting angles for example in THE ANTICHRIST by Alberto de Martino.

Yes, that's because I'm quite a talented camera operator (Laughs). I just like to experiment with the technical side of things, maybe that's why I'm not too good at directing since I always put in a lot of time into the technical aspect.

Is that why you are the camera operator on many of your films?

Yes, I photograph my films in addition to directing.

But, in the credits of **THE GRIM REAPER** Enrico Biribicchi is listed as the camera operator.

That's for legal reasons since you can't have too many jobs on one project because of the unions. That's why I use a fake name.

Then that's why you used so many pseudonyms?

Yeah, that's definitely one reason. But Joe D'Amato sounds like an Italian-American which is quite commercial.

How did you come up with that name?

I saw it on a calendar (Laughs).

How did you get the idea of doing the Black Emanuelle films with Laura Gemser?

Well, after the great success of the first *Emmanuelle* movie, we thought we could do the same and just change the color of her skin.

Later, the series was linked to the Cannibal films (TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM). Was it a great success?

Yes, all the *Black Emanuelle* films made a lot of money.

It was quite a violent film.

Yes, definitely. I had done just about everything with this series except mix it with splatter-type horror. We shot most of the scenes near Rome and I hired all the Filipinos I could find (Screams with laughter). Most people thought we shot the film in the Amazon since we used a lake with palm trees. We hired tourists from the Orient for one week of filming.

In the beginning of the film, is that the skyline of New York or Rome?

(Almost bursting into tears) No, it was honestly New York.

Who was in charge of the special effects?

I prefer to do all the effects myself.



THE LOST CITY (unmade)

You're a one man team, right?

Yes, as I said before, I like to do all the work and not just sit around as director issuing orders. Every film is like a son to me since everything comes from my hands.

And, it's much cheaper that way isn't it?

Yes, cheap and much more interesting for me.

That reminds us of Jesus Franco, who also works this way. Do you like his films?

Yes, I like some of his movies but my favorite is Roger Corman since he also did everything by himself in the beginning, like carrying the film reels from



THE MONSTER HUNTER

room to room.

We just asked since there are many parallels between Franco's work and yours, such as the storytelling devices and fascination with eroticism.

Yes, I like naked bodies because they are very commercial. That's why I make erotic films. If you notice the movies being shown around here, whenever there is a fuck scene, people stop and watch. Sex is much more commercial than other themes.

And the market hasn't changed in recent years?

No, it's all the same.

Were hard-core sex films banned in Italy at this time?

Well, when hard-core sex was banned everybody wanted to see it. Nowadays, the market for these type of films has decreased. But it's a lot different with soft-core sex films.

But you did a lot of hard-core films.

Yeah, between 1978-1980 I made a lot of money with them.

In some film reference books it is mentioned that you made some in the eighties, such as BLUE PORNO

HOLOCAUST?

No, some distributors took scenes from my former films and edited them into new ones so they could link my name to them.

What is your attitude towards the artistic aspects of porno films, like DEEP THROAT?

In my opinion, there is no artistic aspect in the making of pornography. I've seen **DEEP THROAT** and the talk about art concerning this film is only a slick trick to make it more attractive.

The most surprising fact about your pornos is that they have a real storyline.

That's right. The first one I made, **SESSO NERO**, had a story even though it dealt with hard-core sex. But most distributors didn't consider it commercial enough and so they cut out the dialogue and left in the ordinary fuck scenes. And that's the reason why this kind of film is not an art form. The audience is there just to see people fuck. As a filmmaker, it is of no real interest to me.

Isn't it the usual practice of filmirage to shoot two versions which differ in their levels of violence?

No, not normally, but for example in the case of **KILLING BIRDS** we did this.

And STAGEFRIGHT?

No, in this case we only made one version with different soundtracks (the Japanese version was changed in this way).

So you don't care what happens to your films after they are sold?

In general I do care but as I said, I have no influence in the end.

Is it true you shot some of the footage in STAGEFRIGHT?

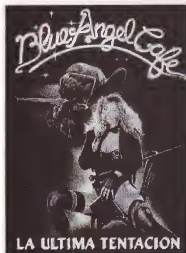
No, I was only the producer. Michele Soavi was my assistant and I don't think it would have been a good idea to take over the camera since I was trying to give a young and promising director a chance.

What about KILLING BIRDS?

In this case I had to take the camera and shoot some scenes since the director, Claudio Lattanzi, wasn't doing too good. The result still didn't please me too much but this is also due to the film's plot.

Let's talk about your goriest film. BURIED ALIVE broke many taboos (as did THE GRIM REAPER) and it leaves the impression that you have very extreme ideas.

Well (Laughs) I'm really not a pervert. I just wanted to shock the audience.



BLUE ANGEL CAFE

We have often heard the rumor that you used a real corpse in some of the effects scenes...

NO, no, this is by no means true. It's all effects. I just bought a lot of internal organs from the local butcher shop. The corpse is not real. But this is what I like about this type of effect. Everybody thinks it's real but you know otherwise. It's the same with **TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM**, fooling the audience into thinking it was shot in the Amazon. I like to fool the audience (Laughs).

*How did you film the embryo eating scene in **THE GRIM REAPER**?*

That was a skinned rabbit (Laughs). When you make this type of film you always try and shock the audience.

*After that film you made **MONSTER HUNTER** and marketed it as **THE GRIM REAPER 2**, then left gore films behind. Why?*

I just titled the film as a sequel because **THE GRIM REAPER** was so successful. I'm a business man and not an artist.

In their own way your films are artistic.

I just love filmmaking but I work in a very professional way and make what the audience wants to see. I like horror films because of the tremendous

opportunities to use special effects, but I don't put a message in them.

What are you currently working on?

It is called **RETURN FROM THE DEAD** and it's a combination of **PATRICK** and a zombie film. It's about someone who lies in a coma and tries to take revenge by means of a dead body.

Is it going to be a gore film?

Yes indeed. But we are going to shoot two versions, because Germany opposes violent scenes and will ban the film otherwise. The Germans just don't want to see things like that.

Oh, the Germans would love to see them, only the censors won't let them (D'Amato laughs). Are there going to be some impressive effects?

Many of the effects will utilize electricity since the zombie is controlled by electronic beams and the killings are also done this way. For example, the zombie takes two electrical wires and holds them to the victim's throat and electrocutes him.

*One of the things we missed in your sequel to **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS** was the actress, Jessica Moore.*

She didn't want to do erotic films anymore since she married a guy who is very opposed to such projects.

Is she American?

No, she's Italian. Her real name is Luciana Ottavani (Laughs). It's a strange world.

In the seventies you were very busy, some years you made ten films. Is it still that way?

No, ten films per year is too many. Last year (1989) I produced eight films and this year only four.

How do you deal with so much work?

I have assistants, such as my editor...

Kathleen Stratton?

Her real name is Rosanna Landi but she decided to change it.

So you don't do the post-production work?

Well, she prepares everything but the final cut is still done by me.

How long does it take to shoot a movie, two weeks?

No. For some of the erotic films I needed two to three weeks but for the horror films I need five to six weeks since they involve special effects. Therefore there isn't much time for a private life but as I said, I just love filmmaking. I am a maniac when it comes to making films!!!

EURO-CRIMETIME

WITH STEVE FENTONE

MEAN FRANK AND CRAZY TONY (1973)

US ad: "*Frank and Tony love to kill... sometimes with a gun... sometimes with a drill!*" A campy 007-styled animated credit sequence is intercut with a drive-by tommygun massacre and an exploding boobytrapped car. A bald-headed Colonel Kurtz lookalike is then murdered with an electric drill through his neck in a red-lit room.

Michele Lupo's **MEAN FRANK AND CRAZY TONY** (originally released as **DIO, SEI PROPRIO UN PADRETERNO!** "Dio, You Are the Eternal Father!") 1973) transposes a comedic spaghetti western plot into a more contemporary setting, with mixed results. "Crazy" Tony Breda (Tony LoBianco, who likely earned the part as a result of his supporting role in **THE FRENCH CONNECTION**) is a small-time crook in Genoa with a girlfriend named Orchid (Fenech, who went on to topline Michele Massimo Tarantini's **POLIZIOTTO/POLICEWOMAN** sexom series). Crazy Tony dresses like a '30s Hollywood hood, we're talkin' fedora, black shirt, white tie and striped suit here, and fantasizes about the legendary Chicago gangster, Frankie "Dio" Diomedes.

When Dio arrives in town, Tony winds up in jail with him. Authorities try to pin a murder rap on Dio, and they are soon transferred to a maximum security prison. While in the prison yard, Tony saves Dio from a mob sniper's bullet, and a shaky "partnership" is formed. When his brother is stabbed to death by a gang-land hitman, Dio promises to avenge him. Upon his release, Tony engineers an inventive ruse to help Dio escape. Together they track down Dio's enemy, Annunziata. Dio plays drill killer by performing an impromptu Black & Decker tonsillectomy on one hood, then tosses a live hairdryer in another's bathtub. The climax unfolds at Annunziata's frozen seafood plant in Marseille, France, which serves as fishy front for an underworld dope-smuggling operation (as with Ferdinando Baldi's **THE SICILIAN CONNECTION**, 1971).

Van Cleeef's patented steel-faced, squinty-eyed routine somehow seems better suited to spaghetti westerns. LoBianco is more remembered for eccentric performances in offbeat American films like **THE HONEYMOON KILLERS**. In **MEAN FRANK AND CRAZY TONY** there is little true chemistry between the two mismatched actors. Euro-sex kitten Fenech's screentime only totals about three minutes (including a brief full-frontal nude scene). A well-dosed hijacked

truck and cop-car chase across the Italian/French border provides some excitement for fans of comicbook auto and motorbike stunts. Overall, this Dino de Laurentiis presentation is far more comedic than I prefer (worst is some ridiculous "gay bums" directed at a limp-wristed convict in a pink t-shirt). In spite of an okay climactic gun battle, the plot is rather too fanciful with a sentimental, moralistic ending. Palatable as a tongue-in-cheek diversion, but nothing overly special.

Irrelevantly retitled and sporting bogus cast and credits—LoBianco is not even mentioned!—this film was distributed to US theatres in 1975 by Aquarius Releasing, in a doctored, drastically rearranged version (**ESCAPE FROM DEATH ROW**, Paragon Video's print, which eliminates all nudity and power tool violence). Under the current title it was released in scratchy, choppy but uncut form by USA Home Video as part of "Sybil Danning's Adventure Video" series. With Edwige's soapy shower scene and two drill-murder scenes intact, this is the preferable option.

THE MEAN MACHINE (1975)

This Italo-Spanish co-production directed by Tulio Demicheli was originally known as **UN TIPO CON UNA FACCIA STRANA TI CERCA PER UCCIDERTI** in Italy. A shootout between rival hoodlum factions results in the death of Don Gaspari Aversi. The murdered Don's young son Rico (Chris Mitchum, star of **THE EXECUTIONER**) is released from prison, after being placed there by the machinations of his late dad's hated enemy, the unctuous Don Vito (Kennedy, who literally *sweats* sleaziness thanks to greased-back hair and pencil moustache). Of course, Rico seeks revenge on Vito for the ruthless gunning-down of his father, not to mention for stealing his ex-girl, Rosa (Malisa Longo, a prolific Euro starlet who seemed to spend the entire '70s decade nude; she was also in Stelvio Massi's crimer **MARK COLPISCE ANCORA!** "MARK THE NARC STRIKES AGAIN," 1976). Rico annoys Vito by undermining his lucrative protection racket, beisting a shipment of diamonds, and interfering with mob drug operations (dope is smuggled inside bars of soap).

THE MEAN MACHINE is to the spaghetti crime genre what **CONDENADOS A VIVIR** aka **CUT-THROATS NINE** (1971) is to the Euro western: namely, the most violent, splatter-filled example. Don Gaspari's initial demise via bullet in the head is accomplished with grisly pansache care of a bloodied dummy stand-in. Two mobsters have their heads brutally bashed against a wall (decorated with pin-up posters of



THE MEAN MACHINE

naked women), and are casually tossed into Don Vito's handy basement acid vat. When Vito's mistress Rosa takes a lover, the cruel Don's men promptly castrate him—the gore aftermath is shown—and also dunk him in the acid (smoky melting face shots are crudely inserted). For her infidelity, Rosa is likewise stripped naked and consigned to the bubbling corrosive vat (offscreen). Vito's hitmen later rub out Rico's sister and brother-in-law in mid-coitus, and gun down his elderly invalid mother right in her wheelchair!

In direct contrast to these bits of shameless ultraviolence, Chris Mitchum as Rico seems positively feeble in his own action scenes, even when "viciously" clubbing a guy's head in with a gun-butt. Also to his detriment, Mitchum attempts his more famous Hollywood dad's lazy-eyed "tough guy" method acting expressions, but mostly only succeeds in appearing half asleep. Chris's blonde, bland presence amounts to only a minor distraction from an otherwise grungy little Euro crimeslime classic. Appropriately, the red groovy-fraught finale occurs in a money-strewn parking lot.

Love interest is provided by Barbara Bouchet, whom Rico first encounters when she slips him a fake bill printed by her counterfeiter uncle. As she did in Alberto de Martino's *giallo* *policier*, *L'UOMO DAGLI OCCHI DI GHIACCIO*/THE MAN WITH THE ICY EYES (1971), blonde Barbara here dons her bellbottom-and-wedgie non-fashions. Accompanied by twelve-bar blues, she performs a come-hither striptease in the middle of the highway to stop a car. Ms. Longo meanwhile initiates a volcanic black-lingerie'd seduction that cocks one lustful gangster's hammer in more ways than one. Despite plenty of carelessly-exposed breasts, oddly there is no genital nudity except for a fleeting blurry closeup of a guy's cock and balls prior to his castration (extreme testicular distress of a less graphic kind was implied in Lenzi's *MILANO ROVENTE*) aka *GANG WAR IN MILAN*). A Venice market bustling vendor, it extends that

contains actual removal of male genitalia. If you're a "free willy" completist, by all means seek out this more dickless version... I'm quite happy with my Monterey Home vid copy, but avoid American Home Video's version, entitled *RICCO*, which is completely bereft of gore.

Soundtrack is an often inventive mix of funky US influences and Continental ethnic. Upon belated US release by Film Ventures in 1979—undoubtedly on account of its excessive gore—the film was distributed as *THE CAULDRON OF DEATH*. A misleading ad campaign fooled people into thinking it was actually an out-and-out horror film.

NAPOLI... LA CAMORRA SFIDA, LA CITTA' RISPONDE (1980)

The title of this film translates to "Naples... The Camorra Challenges, the City Responds." Alfonso Brescia was to the Italo-crime cinema scene what "Miles Deem"/Demofilo Fidani was to the spaghetti western: namely, close to the bottom of the barrel. Better known as "Al Bradley," Brescia is notorious to Eurotrash fans for his incredibly bad late-'70s space operas. However, as with Umberto Lenzi and his relatively crummy cannibal epics, Brescia seemed uncomfortable within "exotic" or "fantastic" locales. His less-ambitious, more mundane crime films are preferable. Like Lenzi, Brescia possibly felt more at home—both figuratively and literally—in the urban Italo-crime genre. Following his late-'70s *STAR WARS* ripoff phase, he directed a whole series of low budget *policieri* starring heavyweight Italian crooner Mario Merola (who co-starred in Umberto Lenzi's *FROM CORLEONE TO BROOKLYN*). Though most of these Brescia/Merola films might be considered far from great—or even particularly good—they do possess occasional flashes of style and imagination.

Several corpses are discovered by police, whereupon events leading up to the deaths are related in flashback. In Naples, the ruthless Camorra syndicate extorts protection payments from local businessmen. When intimidated, wealthy warehouse magnate Francesco Gargiulo (Merola) refuses to pay up, as do other merchants. In retaliation, fire-bombings are directed at various businesses, including Gargiulo's dockland property. The vicious mobsters are led by a smirking Antonio Sabato (on the distinctly opposite side of the law from his anti-heroic role in Giuseppe Vari's *GANGSTERS*, 1977). The Camorra bullyboys go too far when they beat up Don Francesco's teenage son and Sabato rapes the boy's virgin girlfriend (the actual rape is not shown, though the sleaze quotient is upped considerably by an after-the-fact shot of her blood-streaked thighs). Gargiulo's son is later kidnapped, forcibly injected with smack, and—(that would be chillingly graphic in location

peeks behind the walls of a mental institution—he winds up in a rubber room. When normal judicial channels prove fruitless in ending the gangsters' reign of terror, Gargiulo and his colleagues opt to take the law into their own hands. It's payback time!

Our chubby hero leads an assault on the mob's isolated villa. At the past-halfway point things pick up nicely, with stage blood flowing more freely than red vino at a mafioso's funeral. One hood receives both barrels of a sawed-off shotgun in the face while he takes a leak. A Fiat is blown to smithereens by an old man with a rocket launcher. Violence is frantic and sloppy, sometimes in slow-motion *a la* poverty row Peckinpah. The surviving hoods flee into the subterranean catacombs of a well-stocked Neapolitan necropolis; an eerie setting which provides fitting backdrop for the nihilistic climax. In an eye-catching slo-mo death scene, a bullet-riddled gangster collapses against a burial mound of human skulls and bones. Heroic Merola then impales villainous Sabato vampire style on a large wooden cross.

Cut-price production values add to the documentary-like tone. Convincing Mediterranean ambience is instilled by the score's use of traditional ethnic instruments. However, a definite musical nadir is reached during a Gargiulo family get-together when an invisible orchestra suddenly strikes up and Merola bursts into full-throated song! (As he was a popular domestic recording star, this inclusion was no doubt a contractual obligation). Some *intentional* comedy relief involves an exploding toilet and the humiliation of a bare-assed fat guy—unfortunately *not* Merola. More appealing skin comes when a drag queen rips off a hooker's top to expose her tits. There is some scenic travelogue of the Neapolitan coastline, while the jangly soundtrack and extreme closeups of squinting eyes sometimes bring to mind a spaghetti western (whose vigilante anti-heroes share much in common with Italo-crime leading men).

Decidedly unconventional "hero" Merola often resembles a mutation of George CHERES Wendt and Curly of the 3 Stooges, but this film is still worth seeing, if only for its final quarter-hour. Merola and Sabato co-starred in other Brescia crime flicks: *I CONTRABANDIERI DI SANTA LUCIA* aka *THE NEW GODFATHERS* (1979) and *LA TUA VITA PER MIO FIGLIO* (1980).

NAPOLI... SERENATA CALIBRO 9 (1980)

This film was made at around the same time, and follows a similar template as Brescia/Merola's fun *NAPOLI... LA CAMORRA SFIDA, LA CITTA' RISPONDE* (1980). *NAPOLI... SERENATA CALIBRO 9* ("Naples... 9 Calibre Serenade") features picturesque photography of sunny Naples-by-the-sea,

and the same jangling *bowzouki* music which gave that other film such a convincing Mediterranean flavor. Making best use of expansive marine backgrounds, smugglers deliver contraband American cigarettes (Marlboro's, "natch) via speedboat.

At a family banquet, the guests (and unfortunately we the viewers) are "entertained" for several interminable minutes by a shrill singing-and-dancing female ventriloquist, shot with a mostly static camera. Merola endures this all the while with a painted-on, insufferably mirthless grin. Super Mario—as in *CAMORRA*—again raises his own voice in song (*Pavarotti he ain't*). Thankfully interrupting his "joyous" warbling, a pack of motorcycle-riding machinegunners wearing ski-masks crash the party and rob the wealthy dinner guests. In the process the hoods kill Merola's wife and young son in a hail of hot lead (watch the kid's eyelids flicker while he plays "dead"). The lead hooded gunman (acrobatic Italo-vet Nick Jordan) then takes a triumphal slo-mo back-flip off the second floor balcony, landing on his feet. Merola becomes obsessed with the memory of this acrobatic robber.

As Don Salvatore Sebastiani, Merola soon participates in a standard revenge scenario, beginning by rescuing a housewife from two purse-snatchers on a scooter. To help fill the void left by his late son, Don Salvatore "adopts" a young street urchin named Gennarino. With Gennarino to take the place of his murdered son, Merola seems on the brink of finding a surrogate wife in big-boned-big everything!—minor starlet Risa de Simone (who was in Lucio Fulci's *QUANDO ALICE RUPE LO SPECCHIO* aka *TOUCH OF DEATH*, 1988). She's having marital problems with husband Antonio—who also just happens to be the leader of the scumbags responsible for shooting Merola's family. Risa proceeds to slap a topless girl silly after she catches her committing adultery with hubby (Risa is later gunned-down in cold blood by her spouse). In another "touching" (gag) scene backed by weeping violins, Merola invites the homeless waif to move into his son's old room (to their detriment, "cutesy" juveniles featured frequently in the Merola/Brescia entries).

Eventually putting 2+2 together, Merola identifies Antonio as the killer, who quickly hightails it. A massed car/bike pursuit ensues, culminating in a street brawl. It's quite amusing witnessing a guy who looks like he couldn't cut his way out of a damp *pita bread* single-handedly taking on several guys half his age (not to mention cholesterol level). Needless to say, Merola is soon made captive at a beach shack with a ticking timebomb for company. Gennarino cuts him loose in time for a spectacular multiple camera explosion (which probably also blew most of the finances as *deserted to play at being a million-dollar budget* Michelangelo Antonioni). A two-tisted rapid fire slo-mo scene that hilariously foreshadows John Woo's

THE KILLER comes when Merola empties a pair of .45s into a barroom full of criminals (*FAT* he is, Chow Yun Fat he ain't). A high speed powerboat chase and a motor launch exploded by flare pistol provide an exciting resolution that nearly redeems all the film's preceding slow spots (not to mention plot holes of greater circumference than Merola's waist).

SERENATA CALIBRO 9 is assuredly a lower echelon effort, replete with bungling fatty-and-skinny cops, an irritating blonde drag queen in a red sequined dress, plus a surplus of talky "drama." It's fun enough for Eurocrime completists. Do not confuse with Fernando di Leo's sound alike earlier crime flick, **MILANO CALIBRO 9/aka THE CONTRACT** (1972), starring Gastone Moschin and Barbara Bouchet.

THE PERFECT KILLER (1977)

Former war hero Harry Chapman (Clef) does hard-time after a bungled armed robbery at a greyhound racetrack. When the syndicate springs him from the joint, in return he becomes a hitman in their full-time employ.

If nothing else, the *Italo/Spanish* co-production should reinforce your conviction that Clef just doesn't look comfortable without a black cowboy hat ("hip" '70s sideburns and bangs turn his hawk-like features into a virtual Clef caricature). Harry declines when he is instructed to kill his ex-prison-cellmate, so the organization dispatches a prettyboy psycho named Luc ("Robert Widmark" aka Alberto Dell'Acqua, whom co-star John Ireland succinctly calls a "blonde, skinny asshole with an accent you couldn't cut with a .45"). Luc's job is to hit Harry the reluctant senior hitman.

It's worth the price of admission just to see Clef hanging out at a discotheque with an exclusively homosexual/transvestite clientele (his cross-dressing underworld connection is appropriately named "Mandy"). Here, amateurish Luc—who makes up for in sheer demented enthusiasm what he lacks in technical finesse—attempts to kill Harry. Our hero responds by turning him over to the tender loving care of "the girls" (i.e. drag-queens armed with straight razors). When Mandy apparently tries to castrate him, Luc reacts with extreme homophobia by slitting one gay's throat and shoving another's head through a window in painfully bloody fashion.

Harry jets to the Costa Brava, where he reignites an old flame with Christa (Tita Barker), his former partner-in-crime's girlfriend. Here the plot's sights become unfocused, and Director Sirko (real name: Mario Siciliano) has difficulty getting it back between the crosshairs. Christa hires Harry to rip-off an Arab gunrunner (a brief guest spot by rotund Spanish character actor, Fernando Sancho). Some convoluted double-crosses and hazy details make the mid-section a tad

heavy going, enlivened only by frequent bouts of teasy nudity and senseless violence. In Harry's hotel room, loco Luc rapes and murders a young model named Liv (the film attains its unexpected all-time low here as he post-coitally shoots her in the crotch!). Luc also murders Harry's old war buddy, Benny (John Ireland), then makes a run for it with Christa and the stolen arms deal money.

Some kinky beach sex, slap-her-silly sadism and a smash-up concatenation are somewhat muted by a too-convenient resolution that goes on to redeem itself with one crowning act of cynicism. Spanish producer Julio Perez Tabernero went on to direct that Eurocrime gutmuncher abomination, **TERREUR CANNIBAL. THE PERFECT KILLER (QUEL POMERIGGIO MALEDOTTO)** was originally slated to star Stephen Boyd (who died prior to production) and James Mason (who may have had prior contractual commitments).

SCARFACE KILLER (1977)

Films like this were "down-and-out" *Italo-crime* appearances that Jack Palance would no doubt be happy to forget, post-CITY SLICKERS Oscar and all. In a slow-motion prologue, Manzari (nicknamed "Scarface," played by Palance) guns down the father of an immigrant Brazilian boy named Tony. As a young adult, Tony ("Al Cliver" aka Pierluigi Conti) works for a small-change underworld boss named Luigi, using his streetfighting kungfu prowess to collect late protection payments. This provides an excuse for much sloppy fist and foot violence.

When top-honcho hoodlum Scarface writes a rubber check at Luigi's skidrow casino—or "urinal," as Palance flatteringly calls the dive-eager-beaver junior gangster Tony volunteers to collect the delinquent three million *lire*. Tony and his friend Rick pull an imaginative scam (posing as uniformed taxation officers) in order to obtain Scarface's payment. They begin a career of ripping off the powerful syndicate. Scarface quickly responds with beatings and destruction of Luigi's properties. His racket begins to crumble, and to make matters worse, Luigi receives a .45 slug point-blank to the forehead.

With their friend and teacher, a retired "old school" gangster named Vincenzo Napoli (Vittorio Caprioli), Tony & Rick plan their very own syndicate. The trio hide out at an abandoned slaughterhouse (a fabulously sprawling location), making regular forays downtown to hassle Scarface's operation. Rick tries to sell a large quantity of cocaine to Scarface, and another ingenious sting unfolds...

Despite Palance's low profile at this juncture in his career, it appears he was still egotistical enough about his "star status" to demand a stand-in for his none-too-strenuous death scene. Napoli at one point sums up Palance's character, "Just lookin' at him and my asshole twitches!" In 1976, Palance starred in Al Brescia's

SANGUE DI SBIRRO/BLOOD OF A COP. Apparently, Udo Kier was originally slated to appear in **SCARFACE KILLER** (most logically in the prettyboy Rick role?).

Directed by repeat offender Fernando di Leo, **SCARFACE KILLER (I PADRONI DELLA CITTA')** is bolstered by a convincingly authentic locale (smoky pool-halls, casinos, etc.). In a stripclub, a black-Hispanic dancer with an Afro hairdo and silver-painted nipples shakes her booty. Believable, non-intrusive comedy relief and competent dubbing also help, as does **DJANGO** composer Luis Enrique Bacalov's funkied-up flute and electric guitar score. Shaky handheld photography (no "Steadicam" here!) adds extra dynamism to chase sequences. Freefall dirtbike stunts, pump-action-shotgun-on-the-run runouts and a man hung by his chin from a meathook ensure you'll wanna watch this shitkickin' little mofa again. **SCARFACE KILLER** smacks you in the teeth like an exploding Fiat.

Bonus: the audio track boasts a refreshing excess of irresponsible profanity ("prick," "turd," "piss," "fuck," "fart," "balls" and "bastard" for all you expletive completists). United American Video's copy is entitled

MR. SCARFACE ("Meaner Than a Junkyard Dog...!"). As **MISTER SCARFACE**—it's original US theatrical release title from PRO International—it has been up for sale on numerous N. American vid-labels, including Amvest, Congress, Interglobal, Goodtimes and Western World Video (!).

Due to the overwhelmingly popular response to **ETC # 10's Crime review section**, Steve Fontone has agreed to continue to supply **ETC** with his expertise. Look for more reviews next issue.



THE LIVING DEAD GIRL (1982)

Reviewed by William Burns

Jean Rollin's 1982 film **THE LIVING DEAD GIRL** is a two pronged anomaly: a French horror film as well as a gory yet delicately ethereal meditation on

love and death. The film is rather simplistic, letting image and atmosphere convey information instead of dialogue and exposition. Noxious fumes from illegally dumped toxic fumes raises the corpse of Catherine, who in turn slaughters the defilers of her crypt. Remembering a promise of everlasting friendship, she contacts Helene (Marina Pierro), who procures victims to prolong Catherine's unearthly vitality.

Rollin uses haunting symbols of childhood (a china doll, a music box, a rocking horse) and a stark musical refrain played on the piano to emphasize the power the past has over the living and the consequences of nostalgia and personal vows. The value of friendship and



THE LIVING DEAD GIRL

the need to fulfill promises are severely dissected. At first it is Catherine who is dependent on Helene (Helene even offers her own blood to quench Catherine's painful cravings) yet by the end of the film, Rollin reverses the relationship as Helene becomes the selfish monster wanting to keep her friend "alive" despite Catherine's wish to end her frightfully, pathetic existence. The depiction of the living dead girl, despite the beauty of Francoise Blanchard, is not of a slinky seductress but rather her blank, unswerving expression amidst the violence and her repulsion when consuming blood are much more insightful character traits.

Within the lyrical symmetry of the film lies a heart of calculated brutality: eye gouging, throat ripping, an ax murder, a burning (effectively dealing with two nosy Americans), and the final climatic bloodbath as one friend consumes the other in an act of cannibalistic love. Jean Rollin is one of France's finest (and most underrated) fantasy film makers and **THE LIVING DEAD GIRL** is another sterling work of poetically minimalist splatter.

ROY COLT

Shoots His Mouth Off!

An Interview with Brett Halsey

*Conducted by Mike Ferguson & Steve Fentone in Toronto
on the morning of Saturday, October 9, 1993.*

Transcribed & edited by Steve Fentone

*"When you've spent your life like a fortune
you believed would never end / A second
chance will come to you, like a long-lost
friend / Great joy will fill you and flush you
hot, no more will you ever be cool / For
she is the Devil's honey pot, and you will
drown in her, you fool."*

American-born actor Brett Halsey was born Charles Oliver Hand in Santa Ana, California on June 20, 1933. He enlisted in the US Navy, served as a disc jockey, then became a free-lance actor. He was later placed under contracts with both Universal and 20th Century-Fox, before relocating to Italy in the early-'60s. His several wives have included Euro actresses Luciana **A BLACK VEIL FOR LISA** Paluzzi and Heidi **CAPTAIN SINBAD** Bruhl (who passed away in 1992). As well as starring in several American daytime soap operas, Halsey also tried his hand at writing professionally with such unpublished manuscripts as "Yesterday's Children" and "My Soul to Take," and the award-winning best-seller, "The Magnificent Strangers." Brett Halsey is currently based in Toronto, Canada. He is probably best known to ETC readers as a star of several above-average spaghetti westerns, and more recently three lurid Lucio Fulci thrillers.

Appropriately, we approached Mr. Halsey while attending the North American theatrical premiere of Dario Argento's headhunting psycho flick, **TRAUMA** (1993), at which Argento was present. Halsey and longtime friend Dario had met for dinner that same evening.

[Thanks to John Lamontagne for bringing Halsey's presence to our attention, and to former ETC contributor Gordon Harmer for "moral support"]



BRUCE PATRICK QUINN'S

BRETT HALSEY by Bruce Jones

ETC: How did the name "Brett Halsey" come about?

BH: Oh, Admiral Halsey is my great-uncle, an admiral from World War Two. They liked the name Halsey. Brett just came from what sounded good with it. Halsey's a family name, Brett seemed to go well with it... The funny thing about that is, people ask me what is my "real" name—that is my real name now. I've been that longer than anybody else! My children are all Halsey...

ETC: When did you go over to Italy?

BH: 1962. The chronology is: two years at Universal, then about five years of free-lancing, then I went to Fox, and I was there three years, and then I went to Italy. I wrote a novel about it [*"The Magnificent Strangers"*]. It was a magical place.

ETC: In '62, it seemed like everybody migrated to Italy, both American and British actors.

BH: I was doing an American TV series, *FOLLOW THE SUN*. Earlier, Riccardo Freda had requested me to return, and I couldn't do it, I was busy. He requested me for *SEVEN SWORDS FOR THE KING* right at the end of my series. So, within a few days after we stopped shooting the series, I went over to do that picture. Then I came back for *RAPPACCINTI'S DAUGHTER* [a story segment of Sidney Salkow's US horror compilation, *TWICE TOLD TALES*, 1962], and while I was doing that I got an offer from that company to go back and do four films. So, that's how I was there, it wasn't that I "went over" on my own. I went over, after the four films it became five and six, and the next thing it'd been years and I'd become an Italian actor. I lived in a condominium sorta' thing, the top two floors of this condominium. In the *Pina Clara* section; they used to call it the "American Ghetto," because there were so many Americans there.

ETC: So everybody socialized, sat around the cafes?

BH: Oh yeah. The Americans spent a lot of time together, and the Brits. There were a couple of hangout places. The primary American place was "The Lusa," and that's where any American who was in town would go. Ernie Borgnine, everybody. The Brits would

go to "Dave's Dive" (Dave Crowley was a former boxing champion in Britain). There you'd see Barton, O'Toole, all those guys. And then we'd all get together. The time—the sixties—it was a real historical time. I remember one year we did like 450 films in Italy, and Hollywood was around 120, something like that. So when you say there were a lot of English and American actors there, people went there because of the work.

ETC: After starting out in the American industry, how different was it in Italy?



WEB OF VIOLENCE

BH: That was a big adjustment. What I found, in my first [Italian] picture was, I had a scene with five actors, and each of us was speaking our own language. So, I had to learn everyone's lines to know what the Hell was going on in the scene. I mean, we weren't doing Shakespeare, it was an adventure picture, but still, it could get confusing. It's a great exercise for an actor's concentration, because you have the camera's noise,

people talking. Freda used to keep his dogs on the set, and the camera's noise would hurt their ears, so they'd howl. So, you'd have these two great mastiffs sitting next to him, and the camera's on—*d-dut-dut, d-dut-dut*—and the dogs are going, "Ow-oooo! Ow-oooo!" As a matter of fact, one of the first jobs I had when I came back from Italy was on *ALLAS SMITH AND JONES* [US TV comedy-western series]. We started shooting the first day. We started the scene... I stopped. The director said, "What's wrong?" I said, "I don't know." We started again. Stopped. Then I realized I couldn't hear the camera, I thought the camera wasn't working. It just so haunted me; I was used to hearing that camera! I got used to it in Italy. Sometimes it would be distracting, if you're playing something emotional, to have people talking. But they knew the Americans had that training, so if I was playing a scene and I was really distracted, I would stop, and tell them to shutup or get outta here or something, and they would respect this. People would just talk. In Italy, you don't interrupt a conversation because you're shooting.

ETC: Tell us more about working with Freda.



THE MAGNIFICENT ADVENTURER

BH: I worked with Riccardo Freda, who's still alive. I saw him last year when I was in Europe. We did I think three pictures together, and when we broke up, he wanted me to do *ROMEO AND JULIET* [c. 1967]. But I turned it down. I said, "Who's gonna direct me? What language are you gonna shoot it in?" He said, "English." I said, "But, you don't speak English." So he said, "Well that's no problem!" I said, "How much rehearsal are you gonna have to do?" (I'm not trained in Shakespeare). "Four weeks? Four weeks rehearsal, maybe?" He said, "No, no, no, not four weeks rehearsal. We're gonna shoot the picture in four weeks, no rehearsal." I said, "I can't do it, I'll just embarrass myself." He [Freda] didn't speak to me for a long time after that. For an English-speaking person to play Shakespeare, you better get it right. [Freda's *GIULIETTA E ROMEO* eventually co-starred Gerold Meyerler & Rosemarie Dexter]

ETC: You also worked with Bava at around that time.

BH: Mario Bava. Nice man! The son is not nearly as talented... He [Lamberto Bava] and Luigi Cozzi, they imagine themselves to be much better than they are. Lamberto was Bava's assistant, so he was always on the set.

ETC: *ROY COLT AND WINCHESTER JACK*, that was with Mario Bava.

BH: I liked that picture. Bava tried to make it a comedy, and some of the comedy just didn't work. Unless you have a budget and have a lot of time, it's hard to do a comedy western. That picture, we shot it all in Rome. I think it was winter. But, the westerns in Italy... There were a few Americans who had done them. Whaddaya wanna know about the westerns?

ETC: Did you think it was odd to be doing westerns in Europe?

BH: No, I didn't think so. They would make some

mistakes though, some technical mistakes.

ETC: You made two westerns with Spaniard Fernando Sancho [who passed away several years ago]. Would they bring him over from Spain?

BH: Oh yeah, Fernando Sancho was a big star. He was a nice man. The Spanish film community didn't mix much with the Roman community, though. But by and large the Spanish actors were very nice people. The men were. The women were a pain in the ass, generally. Prima donnas. They thought they were big stars, great actresses—I don't know what it was based on.

ETC: Your first western was *KILL JOHNNY RINGO*, and you played it clean-shaven, more traditional. Then, in *WRATH OF GOD* and *TODAY WE KILL*, you had the rougher look, with the beard. Was that a conscious image change for you?

BH: That was the image they wanted. I co-produced *JOHNNY RINGO* and I wrote the script really, we didn't shoot any of the script that they gave us. They didn't have any money either, it was all short money. The funny thing about one of the westerns—maybe it was *JOHNNY RINGO*. We were shooting up in the mountains, it was cold and it started to snow—I think it was *JOHNNY RINGO*. It was the same time that Burt Reynolds was shooting [Sergio Corbucci's] *NAVAJO JOE*. The funny thing about that was, Burt had a book out, and he was talking about *NAVAJO JOE*, and in the book he was complaining about how difficult it was because it was so hot. But, it was snowing, it was up in the mountains, it was colder'n Hell! I don't know, he must have forgotten the movie.

ETC: Reynolds made some derogatory comment about it when he received a 1992 Emmy Award for his sitcom, *EVENING SHADE*: "It makes all those movies like *NAVAJO JOE* seem worthwhile," or something like that. Apparently he had also made "Sergio" jokes to Corson on *THE TONIGHT SHOW*, about how every Italian director was named Sergio. The major western you did was *TODAY WE KILL, TOMORROW WE DIE*. The last half-hour was very atmospheric, and it was shot in a forest, which is completely different from the *JOHNNY RINGO* western you did in Spain. Where was it shot?

BH: *KILL JOHNNY RINGO* was shot all in Italy, near Rome. *TODAY WE KILL, TOMORROW WE DIE* was shot in the forest of Macciano, which is north of Rome, in Etruscan territory. As a matter of fact, I still have a couple of bootleg Etruscan objects and things which we bought there.

ETC: You worked with Alberto Cardone on two spaghettiis.

BH: Cardone, yeah. He was very nice, a good director.

Always in good spirits; but he's dead. I really enjoyed working for Cardone. I remember once when he wanted a high crane shot on one of the westerns. And there was no crane; we were in Almeria. So he sent someone to a fire department and rented their ladder truck; ran the ladder up in the air and used the ladder of the firetruck. Good director. Nice man.

ETC: *Why the name switch to "Montgomery Ford" on your westerns?*

BH: Well, I really didn't wanna do **TODAY WE KILL, TOMORROW WE DIE**. They said, "We'll put another name on it." I said, "Oh, alright." Then what happened was the film became such a big success that the company used the name on my contract for another film. So I did two films with the name. The third film I did with them I didn't let them use the name because the contract didn't allow for it. So I did two films, which turned out to be a big embarrassment: It was one of the most successful pictures I made in Europe, and it didn't have my name on it!

ETC: *TODAY WE KILL had a very stellar cast, like William Berger and Japanese actor Tatsuya Nakadai. [Nakadai was renowned for intense performances in samurai epics like Akira Kurosawa's YOJIMBO, 1961]*

BH: He was great. He was phenomenal. **TODAY WE KILL, TOMORROW WE DIE** was a real fluke. I didn't think it was gonna be anything special, but it was the fourth biggest grosser of the year in Italy. It was one of Dario Argento's first scripts. I don't know how well he speaks English, because I speak Italian, so I always speak with him in Italian. But, we may do a picture together. We did some television together.

ETC: *That would be SUSPENSE, the thriller anthology series?*

BH: I don't know what it was called in English, but they called it **GLIALLO** in Italy. I have an accent. When I speak Italian, you know that I'm not Italian. So I couldn't dub my part in Italian. As a matter of fact, when I did that **SUSPENSE** thing with Dario, the director asked me (the script was in Italian), he said, "What do you wanna play, in English or Italian?" I said, "I don't care, whadda you want me to play?" "Whatever you're most comfortable in." I said, "Well, I'm more comfortable in English, obviously." So, I played in English, everyone else played in Italian. And when I saw it, the dubbing wasn't my voice, and the lip-synch was absolutely perfect. If I didn't know it wasn't me, I would've sworn it was. Yeah, it was really good. But **GLIALLO** was never released here either.

ETC: *When Argento was scripting the westerns, did you ever see him around much, and did you become friendly then, or did it come later?*

BH: It was later. He would come around once in a while, but no, he wasn't around a lot. He's been through some tough times.

ETC: *How about Fulci and WHEN ALICE BROKE THE MIRROR, which eventually became known as TOUCH OF DEATH?*

BH: Was it ever released? I thought it was a really good film. That's the trouble with making pictures over there, there's so many pictures I made that I never saw. What else d'ya wanna know about Fulci? We did a film in Spain—**THE DEVIL'S HONEY**—that's how I met him. And, he had been very ill; he had almost died. And, he was very fragile when we did the film. We got along fine. I like Fulci. I think we did three films together, two or three. (**THE DEVIL'S HONEY, DEMONIA and TOUCH OF DEATH**)

ETC: *What other reminiscences do you have concerning Fulci? Was he kind of eccentric?*

BH: Yeah, he's crazy. He screams, gets very excited, everyone on the set's terrified. But I never was, because I knew he didn't mean it. I found that a lot with Italians. I don't remember ever being yelled at, but the guy standing next to me would really catch Hell. But he was fun, Fulci was fun. And he's a gentleman. He looks like a bag-lady or the male equivalent. I don't

TOUCH OF DEATH



think he's all that old. He's not terribly clean. Oh, I invited him to a thing once; a screening of one of Clint's films as a matter of fact. And he was really spiffy, nice blazer... He has this persona, this aura of being a "character," so he plays it.

ETC: *It must be a huge strain working in Italy, trying to raise money.*

BH: Yes, because there's so much graft involved, kickbacks, and all these things that you hear about with the Italian government. It's the same in the picture industry.

ETC: *Is there much mob involvement?*

BH: No, it's worse than mob involvement. To raise money, to go into one of the banks, a politician has to be behind you, there has to be some kickback to the parties.

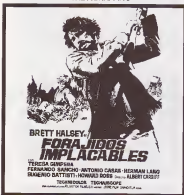
ETC: *What about the Vatican, or do they even care?*

BH: Not anymore. They used to. You see, the Vatican used to own all the theatres. So they pretty well controlled what was played.

ETC: *Do you still have your agent over in Italy?*

BH: Oh yeah. I talked to her yesterday. I did a mini-series for [Duccio] Tessari called **PRINCE OF THE DESERT**. It's modern but it's a desert adventure. We were three months in the desert—Morocco; we were right near the Algerian border, out in the desert. They call it "The Golden Sands" or "The Golden" something—and another month in Italy. With Carol Alt, Rutger Hauer, and Kabir Bedi... he did **SANDOKAN**, which was a big successful Italian TV production. I may do another picture for Tessari (unfortunately he died on September 6, 1994), that's what my agent called me about.

THE KIDNAPPING



BRETT HALSEY Filmography

(EURO ONLY)

Compiled by Mike Ferguson

- 1962 - **THE BURNING OF ROME / IL MAGNIFICO AVVENTURIERO / L'AIGLE DE FLORENCE / EL MAGNIFICO AVVENTURERO / THE MAGNIFICENT ADVENTURER** |—d. Riccardo Freda
- 1963 - **WAR AND PEACE / Italy (never made)**
- **THE SEVENTH SWORD / LE SETTE SPADA DEL VENDICATORE / SEPT EPEES POUR LA ROI / SEVEN SWORDS FOR THE KING** |—d. Riccardo Freda
- **JACK AND JENNY / JACK UND JENNY** / drama |—d. Victor Vicas
- 1964 - **THE MAGNIFICENT CUCKOLD / IL MAGNIFICO CORNUTO / LA COCU MAGNIFIQUE** |—d. Antonio Pietrangeli
- **IL PONTE DEI SOSPERI / EL PUENTE DE LOS SUSPIRIOS / LE PONT DES SOUPIRS** |—d. Piero Pierotti Carlo Campogalliani
- **HOOF OF TRUTH / L'HEURE DE LA VERITE** |—d. Henri Calef
- 1965 - **THE AVENGER OF VENICE / L'HEURE DE VERITE** |—d. Henri Calef
- **ESPIONAGE IN LISBON / DA 077—INTRIGO A LISBONA / 077 MISSION LISBOA** |—d. Tulio Demicheli
- **DER KONGRESS AMUSIERT SICH / LE CONGRES S'AMUSE** |—d. Geza Radvanyi

- 966 - **SPY IN YOUR EYE / BERLINO, APPUNTAMENTO PER UN SPIE / OPERAZIONE POLIFEMO** |—d: Vittorio Sala
- **BANG BANG / O L'AMMAZZO A LA SPOSO** |—d: Serge Piolet
- **KILL JOHNNY RINGO / UCCIDETE JOHNNY RINGO** |—d: "Frank G. Carroll" / Gianfranco Baldanello
- 1967 - **ANYONE CAN PLAY / LE DOLCI SIGNORE** |—d: Luigi Zampa
- **WEB OF VIOLENCE / TRE NOTTI VIOLENTE / TRES NOCHES DE VIOLENCIA** |—d: Nick Nostro
- 1968 - **FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT / QUANTE VOLTE... QUELLA NOTTE** |—d: Mario Bava
- **TODAY WE KILL... TOMORROW, WE DIE! / A ME, DOMANI A TE / 5 GACHETTES D'OR** |—d: Tonino Cervi [BH aka "Montgomery Ford"]
- **THE WRATH OF GOD / L'IRA DI DIO / HASTA LA ULTIMA GOTA DE SANGRE** |—d: "Albert Cardiff" / Alberto Cardone [BH aka "Montgomery Ford"]
- **ONE DAY AFTER AUGUST / UN DIA DESPUES DE AGOSTO** |—d: German Lorente
- **TUTTO SUL ROSSO / TOUT SUR LE ROUGE / ALL ON THE RED** |—d: Alfio Florio
- 1969 - **PERVERSION STORY / LAS TROMPETAS DEL APOCALIPSIS / CALDI AMORI DI UNA MINORENNE** |—d: Julio Buchs
- **THE KIDNAPPING / 20,000 DOLLARI SPORCHI DI SANGUE / RAPTO; PAGA O UCCIDIAMO TUO FIGLIO / FORAJIDOS IMPACABLES** d: Alberto Cardone
- 1970 - **ROY COLT AND WINCHESTER JACK / ROY COLT E WINCHESTER JACK** |—d: Mario Bava
- 1986 - **DANGEROUS OBSESSION / IL MELE DEL DIAVOLO** |—d: Lucio Fulci
- 1987 - **THE COMMANDER / COMMANDER / DER COMMANDER** |—d: "Anthony Dawson" / Antonio Margheriti
- 1988 - **WHEN ALICE BROKE THE MIRROR / TOUCH OF DEATH / QUANDO ALICE RUPPE LO SPECCHIO / THE BROKEN MIRROR** |—d: Lucio Fulci
- **DEMONIA / LIZA** |—d: Lucio Fulci
- 1989 - **VELVET DREAMS / FLYING / THE FLIGHT OF VENUS / EL VUELO DE VENUS / SOGNO PROIBITO** |—d: Vincenzo Salviani

EURO TV

- 1987 - **ROSE** |—d: Tomasso Sherman
- 1988 - **GIALLO / SUSPENSE** |—producer: Dario Argento

ONE DAY AFTER AUGUST



A FEW REVIEWS MORE

JONATHAN

(1970) Directed by
Hans Geissendorfer
Reviewed by Steven
Puchalski

This German-lensed pic gives credit to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, but director Geissendorfer's artsy take on that venerable vampire tale also manages to cram an anti-fascist subtext into the corners, giving us one of the first (and only) politico-erotic blood-sucker yarns. On the surface it's a slow, intellectual costume drama (in other words, a typical arthouse snooze), but a creeping sense of the macabre makes this yarn stick to your ribs. And though initially criticized for its half-baked metaphor, in the light of today's avalanche of facile horror swill, I'll take **JONATHAN**'s crude social message over any of today's vampire pics, which look more like a warmed over *Hieroglyphics* romance than a red blooded fright-fest.

The story is set in a small, 19th century Teutonic town which is cruelly lorded over by a crackpot called The Count (Paul Albert Krumm). Following the standard routine, the down-trodden peasants come up with a plan to rebel against their ruling class oppressor and destroy this fiend, once and for all. But first, they need a local schmeck to infiltrate the vampire's clan meetings, get info on their numbers, and discover their weaknesses. Enter Jonathan, a local, bonthead who draws the short straw, and with it, is given a bagful of crucifixes and a boot in the ass out of town... Straight toward the Count's house.

This is far from an old fashioned telling of the Stoker tale though, because the filmmakers are more interested in painting a larger mural of man's unending capacity for evil and inhumanity. And it won't take a Mensa candidate to figure out what type of sledgehammer politics Geissendorfer is shovelling the moment we get a gander at this sinister Count. You see,

Krumm is outfitted with a hairdo just like ol' Adolph H. himself, and barks orders to his minions like he's been sitting in his musty castle, taking notes from the 1934 Nuremberg rallies.

This is a decidedly schizophrenic endeavor, because in addition to their blatant anti-fascist themes, the filmmakers also toss in some eccentric tidbits to keep modern-day audiences amused. First, there's the half-baked roster of characters, beginning with The Count, who comes off like a total Krumm buffoon, with Krumm playing the role so broadly that you'd think he just left a touring company of "Springtime for Hitler." And though the film is named after Jonathan, the poor spineless guy just gets bounced about, from the clutches of The Count's lusty brides to the castle torture chamber, without much control over his situation. Jaergen Jung's title performance doesn't help matters either, because even though he has all the appropriate Euro-stud good looks, this prettyboy is so vacant he's nearly transparent.

Geissendorfer makes some odd directorial choices along the way, and includes a few changes in the vampire mythos for good measure—primarily the fact that sunlight doesn't seem to effect these bloodsuckers. For this interpretation, it's pure water which destroys them. On the plus side, he films his attacks with all the passion of a couple's first kiss, while tossing in plenty of gorgeous bits for sheer effect. This includes an entourage of ethereal young girls; nuns hung from nooses; a thirst-quenching wound in The Count's chest; and a healthy dollop of sex to keep blue collar viewers awake.

On the other hand, portions of the film are so earnest you might wonder whether to laugh out loud or not. And don't expect the "rousing" peasant attack in the last 15 minutes to end the tale on an up note. Because instead of the typical dose of cheap thrills, Geissendorfer uses the finale to further illustrate how brutality

poisons everything in its path. And how even the best of intentions are tainted in blood.

Despite a relatively tame budget, the film uses its authenticity to good effect. It's certainly more realistic than those hacklot vampire movies which look like some SoCal designer's idea of Gothic Chic, as profiled in *Better Castles and Gardens*. Much of its lyrical, visual appeal is thanks to cinematographer Robbie Muller who, in later years, would move into Wim Wenders' stable with **THE AMERICAN FRIEND** and **PARIS, TEXAS**, plus lensing American indies like **BARFLY**, **DOWN BY LAW** and **REPO MAN**. Muller gives the proceedings an atmospheric, widescreen gloss, while conjuring up some eye-popping vistas and dreamy, candlelit sets. Better still, Muller's hordes of cross-brandishing, filthy peasants perfectly convey that rare, elusive stench of rural life.

In the past few years we've all had to endure dozens of new, revisionist takes on the vampire genre—from nude trash to arthouse wannabees—and few leave an impression. Sure, Coppola's **DRACULA** was high-gloss trash, but it was also so hideously miscast it was hard to keep from cringing (what was Francis thinking when he hired Keaton? I'm surprised he didn't sign Crispin Glover for the title role). And I won't even get into that insipid Anne Rice pop-opera, which was crammed down our throats last year. Thankfully, this is an exception to that pack of studio-spawned drivel. One that has the right look, a dark underbelly and a lick of intellect—all of which helps us to ignore its occasional lapse in judgement.

JONATHAN is a work that manages to give you the creeps, seduce you with its vision, even while you're slapping your forehead with each wrongheaded turn. Yet like Herzog's **NOSFERATU**, this is a joyride of high art, cheap thrills and lavish excess. It's a total original, full of exotic treats.

ODIO MI CUERPO

(1973) Directed by Leon Klimovsky

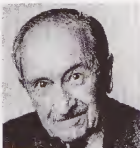
Reviewed by Bob Sargent

One of the more wacked-out entries in Leon Klimovsky's extensive filmography, this rarely seen Spanish-Swiss co-production documents what happens after a misguided surgeon (Narciso Ibañez Menta) transplants the still-intact brain of a road-killed playboy named Ernesto (Manuel de Blas) into the curvaceous body of Leda (Alexandra Bastedo) whose own synapses have gone flatline. When she awakens, instead of showing her "rescuer" undying gratitude, the horrified Leda burns the good doctor alive—thus silencing forever the one person who knew the true nature of her sex-changed condition—and then takes advantage of the resulting diversionary fire to make her escape from the clinic's recovery ward. Unable to cope with all the would-be Romeos constantly hitting on her—along with the male sexual desires now raging within her (and asserting themselves at the most awkward of moments)—Leda becomes progressively more demented until she is finally killed by a gang of sailors who rape her in one of the bleakest endings ever seen in a European exploitation effort from that period.

While the print I viewed was devoid of any explicit sex or nudity, sufficient sadism remained to make **ODIO...** exploitative enough to merit a look-see by Euro-trash aficionados (and insuring a return visit should an uncut and/or alternate version exist). One particularly lurid scene finds Leda chasing and viciously bullwhipping a partially denuded woman (Ernesto's former wife) whom she's trying to blackmail for the insurance money on his "death." On other occasions, Ernesto's libido overwhelms Leda just enough to cause her some minor embarrassment, such as when Nurse Lidya (Gemma Cuervo) is taken

aback when her gauze-wrapped patient suddenly lunges for her breasts, or Leda gawks at the boobs of her friend Mica (Eva Leza) which are practically tumbling out of her bathrobe as she pours the morning coffee. In these instances, the picture is handled as sexplicitively as possible without actually showing the skin which is most likely on view in the export version.

The photography delivered by Francisco Sanchez is rather workmanlike, with the exception of a few bizarre—almost hallucinatory—sequences where Leda is being



LEON KLIMOVSKY

assaulted. The male brain in her body is repulsed by the improper sexual advances being made by other men, a point Sanchez drives home in a most shocking way by suddenly quick-cutting from beautiful Leda to balding Ernesto... whenever an admirer has been/um in a clinic!

A former dentist, Leon Klimovsky launched his career as a film director with the Argentinian production **EL JUGADOR** (1947). Going anywhere the box office winds blew him, the prolific Señor K—besides making a buck with his various Paul Naschy horror collaborations (**LA NOCHE DE WALPURGIS** [1970] and **LA REBELION DE LAS MUERTAS** [1972], to name but two)—also dabbled in war movies (**L'URLO DEI GIGANTI** [1968], using the pseudonym "Henry

Mankiewicz") and Euro-westerns (**POCHI DOLLARI PER DJANGO** [1966]).

Canadian born Alexandru Bastedo now lives on the West Sussex coast of England with her husband, occasionally doing theater to support her activities as an animal-rights activist. A more sedate lifestyle for sure... and a far cry from her early days in sexy vampire fare like Vicente Aranda's **LA NOVIA ENSANGRENTADA** (**BLOOD SPATTERED BRIDE**, 1972) where she slept nude in a coffin built-for-two (with pouty Maribel Martín). Ms.

Bastedo recently went on record as saying a multilingual family background came in handy when her '60s TV show, **THE CHAMPIONS**, caught on in Spain. "Soon after, I made 10 films there and became known as La Bastedo, a bit like La Loren in Italy."

Manuel de Blas (the former Mr. Patty Shepard) played secondary roles in numerous Spanish horror films of the '70s, including Amanda de Ossorio's third "Blind Dead" epic, **EL BUQUE MALDITO** (1974). In **ODIO...** de Blas serves in more of a flashback/hallucinatory capacity, leaving the lion's share of the screen time to his blonde female co-star.

Narciso Ibañez Menta was the real-life father of director Narciso Ibañez Serrador (**LA RESIDENCIA** [1969]). While appearing in other Hispanic horrors for Klimovsky—like **LA SAGA DE LOS DRACULAS** (1972)—Ibañez Menta could also be seen on Spanish television, even hosting the premiere broadcast of Paul Naschy's **EL AULLIDO DEL DIABLO** (1988) several years back.

The ensemble cast also includes Blanca (UNA VELA PARA EL DIABLO) Estrada, Maria (LA VENGANZA DE LA MOMIA) Silva, Eduardo (UNA LIBELULA PARA CADA MUERTO) Calvo, and Luis (EL ESPANTO SURGE DE LA TUMBA) Ciges. How Byron Mabe (the director of **SHE FREAK**) ended-up co-starring in this flick is anybody's guess!

THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME

Reviewed by William Burns

Jess Franco's 1979 film, **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME**, is perhaps the most self-reflective work made by the maddeningly inconsistent director of over 150 films. Franco himself plays Mathis Vogel, an insane seminary student excommunicated for his warped sense of the divine and the profane. Vogel begins his own crusade against sin as the "Inquisitor," murdering women he deems "fallen" and then sells fictional accounts of his abhorrent behavior to a sadomasochistic magazine called *The Dagger and the Garter*. After witnessing a Black Mass, Vogel plunges deeper into madness until he is forced by a priest to give himself up to the police.

Franco offers the viewer a jaded and degraded world view wallowing in a trashy, blighted ambience; a sickening, squalid feeling of dread pervasive in the piss-soaked alleys, sleazy hotel rooms, decadent nightclubs and decaying chateaus. Every character is corrupted and has their price (prostitutes, police, editors, high class "royalty"). Even the stalwart institution of religion has spawned a murderous fanatic.

The real focus of the film is voyeurism as Franco not only indicts his characters and the viewer but also accuses himself of the same offense. Franco uses a play within the film to further abuse the viewer's compulsion to watch acts of depravity. A sleazy Count hires young hedonists to perform macabre, erotic shows of torture and cruelty for his degenerate friends. Vogel stumbles into a performance and watches from the wings. Franco gives the viewer three perspectives of the "Black Mass": Vogel's, the audience's and of course the camera's. Ironically it is Vogel who must turn away from the tableaux as the audience gets carried away and initiates an orgy leaving only the viewer to watch the extended session of group participation. This grotesque spectacle is staged for

a second time as a set up to trap Vogel, suggesting that Vogel's perverse curiosity (and the viewer's) can be exploited by the police as well as the director. The juxtaposition of shots of Vogel's eye and the camera's gaze suggests the equation of film maker and deviant. Further blurring the distinction, Franco's wife Lina Romay plays the role of Ann, the woman Vogel obsesses over and consequently beats and kills. Another sequence has Vogel spying on Ann's lesbian tryst which takes on a realistic validity as Romay (being Franco's most prolific actress) has had sex in front of Franco's camera many times. Finally the Vogel/Franco connection can be seen in artistic ways as well. Vogel sells his aberrations to a magazine while Franco turns his into films.

THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME is the perfect showcase for Franco's idiosyncratic technique. From lingering low angle shots of the sickle imposing cathedral to the frantic presentation of wildly dancing girls, the director's personal vision never dilutes just intensifies. Very little bloodletting is shown yet religious/sexual torture is shown in unflinching detail (Vogel rubs a crucifix across a whore's genitalia before killing her.) **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME** is an accurate reflection of its creator and title character, torn between the temptations of flesh and the zealotry of righteousness.

THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN

(1971)

Reviewed by William Burns

Jess Franco's 1971 work, **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**, is a film which is unlike any other wearing the banner of Frankenstein. This surreal, idiosyncratic achievement is one of the few films that cannot be pigeonholed into the usual bolt in the neck, lumbering monster genre of works inspired by Mary Shelley's fertile imagination. Franco runs rampant with the theme

of reanimation and grotesque experimentation, the perversities that men allow under the auspices of science. The act of creation is equated with control, man's domination of its progeny is a dangerously accepted norm in the pursuit of empirical knowledge. The film displays how scientific "miracles" soon descend into ruthlessly sadistic exercises in power.

The film opens in the laboratory of Dr. Frankenstein. The doctor and his assistant (played by Franco himself) are putting the final touches on the monster using the deep incision ray. A carriage approaches the house, its occupants, Garante and Melissa, attack Frankenstein and steal the monster. The silver-skinned bebe-moth is brought to Castle Barna, the home of Frankenstein's nemesis Calioistro. Calioistro plans to control the creature using Melissa (revealed to be a freakish half bird/half woman) to transmit her master's orders via magnetic waves. The creature's mission is to capture women for Calioistro's experiments. On Frankenstein's death bed, the stricken scientist tells Dr. Steward about his ghastly creation and asks Steward to retrieve the monstrosity. At Frankenstein's funeral, Steward meets Dr. Vera Frankenstein (the daughter of the murdered physician) who wants to get to the bottom of her father's death. Vera steals Frankenstein's body, and using the deep incision ray, brings her father back to life momentarily. He tells her to find the creature. Melissa and the monster have kidnapped a noblewoman for their master's mad plan to usher in the age of Pentos, a new race of beings formulated by Calioistro. Before a congregation of zombies, Garante beheads the captured woman, keeping the head for the fabrication of another construct to mate with the monster. Vera jolts Frankenstein to fleeting life again and he informs her that Calioistro orchestrated his death. Vera vows vengeance. The creature is directed to kidnap another woman (a artist's model), and when he hesitates, Melissa commands him to obey. Vera's assistant Abigail sees Melissa



THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN

devouring a body and barely escapes the mad woman. Vera has been captured and chained up in Calioistro's dungeon. She is tortured and hypnotized by Calioistro to concoct a new creature using the parts of beautiful women. Dr. Steward and Inspector Tanner find Abigail, who incoherently babbles about Vera and Calioistro. They reanimate Frankenstein who tells them of Vera's quest for revenge against Calioistro and then attempts to strangle Steward. Tanner stops Frankenstein by dousing him with sulfuric acid.

Vera has succeeded in designing a mate for the creature and she is readied for the ritual of procreation. The Inspector and Steward infiltrate the castle, disrupting Calioistro's ceremony. Chaos ensues as Melissa attacks the monster, but she is quickly

destroyed. Calioistro uses his mental powers to escape the creature's murderous grasp. The monster is shot dead trying to carry Vera away. Vera's will is restored, but Calioistro has escaped into the churning surf.

THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN is a work in which Franco forsakes his usual radical technique and frantic presentation to focus on the outlandish imagery within the film. There is copious nudity, yet it is not presented erotically or even with the usual sleazy zeal found in other Franco masterpieces. In the film, naked bodies are just flesh, a disposable contrivance used for food or scientific fodder. Flesh is an instrument that can be molded by those with knowledge and authority. The weakness of the body can be manipulated through science (Calioistro

complains of his "rotting creations"), torture or mesmerism. Franco fills the screen with limbs, brains, skeletons, all the components for body building (sorry). The nakedness of the silver skinned barly monster, his "mate," Melissa and the various body part donors suggests a primal urgency absent in the rest of the "civilized" characters. The monster is the purest form of life, the only purpose for which it was constructed was to live, and from this rebellious existence comes the god-like endowment of the creator. That is why Calioistro needs it to procreate, why the dying Frankenstein wants his "son" back and why Vera must continue the legacy, fashioning a female abomination.

Yet the "spark of life" isn't a miraculous sensation but a spastic, screaming awareness of suffering. The deep incision ray gives birth to thrashing works of muscle and bone, howling in agony (the Frankenstein monster cries "It hurts me, my head!"). Frankenstein is shocked back to twitching consciousness so many times he tries to strangle his friend Dr. Steward. The ultimate example of the potency, pain and possibilities inherent in the unleashing of creative energies is seen in Vera's torture sequence. Vera and Garamite (who has angered his master Calioistro) are bound together naked, back to back. Beneath them are poisoned spikes and the monster will whip them until one falls on the deadly skewers. Witnessing this repulsive scenario is Calioistro and Melissa, who observes in squawking ecstasy. The overwhelming feeling of humiliation, disgust, and debased curiosity makes the scene almost unbearable, but not unwatchable. To see a balking, bestial man lashing helpless captives makes one wonder to what corrupt use would Frankenstein's discovery be put to in reality. When Garamite finally falls on to the spikes, it's almost a relief for not only Vera and the viewer, but the monster as well.

The most fascinating character in the film must be Melissa, the bird lady. A screeching nude woman, sparsely covered with blue

feathers, clawing with razor-sharp talons, Melissa is bizarre even for a Franco film. She was produced by Calioistro to be his daughter, but her blindness made her unworthy. She is a prophet, a conduit for Calioistro's magnetic, mind altering forces and a savage, devourer of men. As a reward Calioistro lets her pray at the "altar of flesh", ravaging a shackled victim, her maniacal laughing, his bellows of torment and detached dissonant bird cries all synthesize into a raucous, nauseating symphony. Melissa is the quintessential Franco figure: equally abominable and enchanting, horribly beautiful and uniquely forbidding.

THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN is just one more example of Franco's startlingly individualistic view of cinema. With this work (and its thematic brethren **DRACULA CONTRA FRANKENSTEIN** and **LA HIJA DE DRACULA**), he effectively shuts the door on the Universal/Hammer measuring stick for horror films. Melissa the bird woman foresees "Pleasure, death and blood," an apt description of Franco's ground-breaking oeuvre.

NIGHTS OF TIRELESS SEX

(1976) aka: **HEIDER SEX IM NACHTVERKEHR**
Reviewed by Robert Monell

NIGHTS OF TIRELESS SEX often gets lost in the shuffle during discussions of Franco's output while he was employed by the Swiss exploitation producer Erwin C. Dietrich. One of the director's most elusive titles, **NIGHTS...** remained unavailable during most of the Franco video boom of the last decade. Franco himself has added to the confusion, claiming he did not direct this XXX rated Zurich-based comedy. The fact that Michael Thomas (Erwin Dietrich's pseudonym of preference) is credited as the director on the film's promotional materials seems to support this subterfuge.

It's easy to understand why those not yet initiated into the multi-layered stratum of Franco's alternate universe could mistake this title for one of Dietrich's throw-away sex comedies. **NIGHTS OF TIRELESS SEX** doesn't even look like a usual Franco film and there's not a zoom shot in sight! What!? A Franco film without barrages of gratuitous zooms? What gives...? It is unclear if the director voluntarily restrained himself here or if Dietrich (who provided the sketchy script) exercised his contractual rights and reedited the film to suit his own style. Whoever is responsible for the final product has no reason to feel shame, for **NIGHTS...** stands out as an unusually witty and fast paced satire of the XXX film industry in general and Franco's own particular contributions to it. There's even a clever parody of Franco's *Women-In-Prison* sado-fests disguised as an S&M nightclub performance, complete with a nude woman in a bamboo cage and scantily clad prison guards!

As in most XXX fare, **NIGHTS...** is structured as a series of episodes designed to get its hooker-heroines into as many fuck and suck situations as possible with lots of lesbian action, spaced out at regular intervals. But as he has done in so many other genres, Franco subverts this familiar pattern with his very personal brand of irony. For instance, in one prominent sequence a voyeur masturbates in the corner of a room as one of the girls rolls around in bed showing herself off for his edification. Franco continually cuts between the man, the woman, and some graphic porno stills taped to the wall. The implication in the montage being that the voyeur has turned the willing woman into an erotic object, like the photos. Even though the scene is quite funny, it also makes a visual pun on the popular feminist concept of the objectification of women. In fact, if one considers the film carefully it could be read as an allegory of female empowerment in a world which tends to sexually enslave women. When the three heroines are "free" to live their life as hookers, the entire con-

cept of freedom is brought into question, conversely, in the film's clever final scene the women turn the tables on the white slaver by turning him into an object for their gratification.

This scene, set in a Turkish white-slave brothel, shows Franco at the top of his form. As slave-master Eric Falk humps the three women, an Arab patron ejaculates on a religious picture of an Islamic leader (this was in a pre-Salman Rushdie era)! Finally, the men collapse in sexual exhaustion as the women crawl on top of Falk, pinning him to the floor in erotic servitude to them. Franco shoots this scene from an overhead angle which emphasizes the male-to-female power shift. Falk now appears to be the sex slave. Of course, those initiated into political correctness, along with the usual legion of Franco detractors, will once again fail to catch the irony. The very fact that Franco is able to present these themes visually is evidence of his cinematic skill.

The three delicious heroines are played with delightful exuberance by Kali Hansa (Marisol Hernandez), Dittia Fatou and Pilar Coll—three of Franco's most gorgeous erotic comedienettes. Their presence make the film a visual delight which is further enhanced by ingenious use of Pop-Art, surrealist and minimalist motifs which Franco and cinematographer Peter Baumgartner have integrated into the set design. In fact, there are no exterior shots or locations whatsoever in this film (probably the result of a microscopic budget). Despite these restrictions, this is one of Franco's most elegant XXX titles. Another plus is Walter Baumgartner's atmospheric jazz score. It is especially fascinating to watch **NIGHTS...**, back-to-back with **DORIANA GRAY**, another XXX title Franco directed in 1976. Although the film is composed in an entirely different mood than the Ingmar Bergmanesque **DORIANA GRAY**, both films employ the XXX genre to essay one of Franco's favorite themes—the use of sex as a weapon in the high stakes bid for attaining power over oneself and others.

THE INGLORIOUS BASTARDS

(1978)

Reviewed by Kevin Grant

I once thought that if you looked up "action-packed" in an Italian dictionary, the translation would read "Enzo G. Castellari." The man has never had the greatest of scripts to work with (what else is new in Euro-trash?), but his ability to take a paltry budget and deliver the goods in impressive slam-bang style is second to none. He's a cut-price Cameron with no shortage of flair and imagination. **THE INGLORIOUS BASTARDS** is both a throwback to the American B-war movies (Bo Svenson does a passable impression of a Jeff Chandler or Lee Marvin-type), and another showcase of Castellari's engagingly simple, all-action style. Svenson plays the leader of a band of American soldiers, on their way to a court martial for a variety of misdemeanors when their truck is ambushed by a German fighter. Five survivors head for Switzerland, among them small time gangster Peter Hooten and taunted black killer Fred Williamson (who obviously enjoyed the experience as his rippling physique features prominently in Castellari's **BRONX WARRIORS** and **THE NEW BARBARIANS**).

Battling through German lines, the motley crew pick up an enemy fellow deserter (who's fond of spouting profundities like "Why do we keep on with this useless war?"), before stumbling upon a sabotage mission run by gruff US colonel Ian Bannen. They are forced to take on the job, which involves blowing up a train carrying the new V2 rocket with the help of French partisans, after wiping out the real saboteurs by accident. The mission takes them first to an SS outpost, run by hammy old Donald O'Brien, Dr. Butcher himself, who hates all things American, from Coca Cola to Hollywood (turned down once too often, Don?). Despite his ranting, and the wicked way he holds a riding crop, he's about as menacing as a supermarket shopper, and

our inglorious friends are soon on their way with a stolen truck. The final assault on the train is vintage Castellari mayhem—extended slow motion slaughter seen from numerous camera angles. Dear Enzo always has believed that if a stunt's worth showing, it's worth showing again. It's this kind of cheap and cheerful approach that makes his set-pieces so remarkable, with budgets that strain to reach the level of fuck all.

No cigar for spotting the **DIRTY DOZEN** influence on the plot, which has fuelled many a spaghetti action flick down the years (Tonino Valerii's western **MASSACRE AT FORT HOLMAN** springs to mind), and the whole thing is shot through with G.I. Joe comic-book gusto, from the garish opening titles to Francesco De Masi's cymbal crashing score. The war movie could not escape the long arm of Euro-trash in its Sixties heyday of course. Gianfranco Parolini (known to everyone but his mother as Frank Kramer) and Umberto Lenzi in particular, with **DESERT COMMANDOS** (1967) and **LEGION OF THE DAMNED** (1969), established a precedent that **BASTARDS** follows. With Sam Peckinpah's **CROSS OF IRON** (1977) doing roaring business in Europe, Castellari wasn't the only one cashing in—Lenzi himself turned in the shifty arthouse **FROM HELL TO VICTORY** (1979) before packing his bags for the jungle and an appointment with Zora Kerova's tits. As with any Castellari epic, it's his avowed love of Peckinpah-style slo-mo that stands out. He may have an unpretentious, ballsy approach to movie making, but he's certainly something of an auteur when it comes to action. The tumbling bodies and earth-shredding explosions also reveal his background in editing and stunts.

Son of genre vet Marino Girolami and brother of Enio, aka "Thomas Moore" (seen in his sibling's **THE NEW BARBARIANS** (1983) and **LIGHTBLAST** (1985)), Castellari has made his mark in most fields of Italo-exploitation, including some of the more successful cash-ins. B-movies were loved by the guys like him. In the crime movie boom of

the mid-Seventies, he re-teamed with **KEOMA** star Franco Nero for the drugs thriller **THE MARSEILLE CONNECTION**. When post nuke action was in vogue (thanks to the smash hits **ROAD WARRIOR** and **ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK**, both 1981) Castellari teamed up with producer Fabrizio De Angelis for the ultra-violent **BRONX WARRIORS** films, and then batched the 21st century western **THE NEW BARBARIANS**, famed for it's cardboard costumes, George Eastman's hairy homosexual ranting, and some of the finest exploding torsos committed to celluloid.

From crime films like Carlo Lizzani's **CRAZY JOE** (1973) to his Castellari period, Fred Williamson has successfully exported his black icon status. He also starred with Svenson in de Angelis' disappointingly piss-weak **DEADLY IMPACT**. His backneyed role in **BASTARDS** (he's on death row for topping a racist officer) is offset by some inoffensive comedy, as when he joins his buddies for bathtime with some Nazi babes. They're smarter than that, however, realizing that black supermen were not exactly what the Fuhrer had in mind.

Always the dude to choose when economy is the key word, Castellari rarely lets budget restrictions spoil the party. **BASTARDS** may not be the high point of his career (for my money it's a split decision between **KEOMA** and **BRONX WARRIORS**), but as a compact action flick it easily holds its own. Cameraman Giovanni Bergamini, who also lensed Castellari's western **GO KILL AND COME BACK** (1968), and prolific editor Gianfranco Amicucci make the most of the set-pieces, and though the violence is pretty mild, there are a few choice squibs that Peckinpah would have been proud of. Castellari certainly runs the gamut of clichés, but comes out unscathed thanks to his "fuck common sense, let's just have some fun" attitude. He proved he had lyrical muscle with **KEOMA**, and the producers of this one knew where to score for a quick, bank and a satisfying slice of spaghetti escapism.

DELIRIUM

(1972)

Reviewed by Dennis Capicik

Renato Polselli is perhaps best known for directing *L'AMANTE DEL VAMPIRO* (released stateside as *THE VAMPIRE AND THE BALLERINA*), one of the many sexy vampire films churned out of Italy in the mid-sixties. In 1972 Polselli directed this minor sex/thriller which stars Mickey (BLOODY PIT OF HORROR) Hargitay as Dr. Herbert Lyutak. Beginning in Vietnam, Dr. Lyutak is wounded in the line of duty when he informs us (through voiceover) that he was born in Budapest, graduated with a degree in criminal psychology and emigrated to the United States in 1962. In 1963 he enlisted in the Marines and did three consecutive tours in Vietnam, where he was awarded a Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor. However "...due to this dedication, he will require an extended period of rehabilitation prior to entering society." So begins *DELIRIUM*.

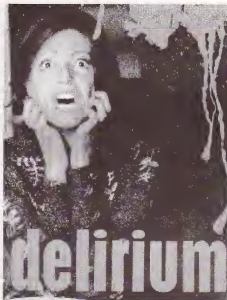
Gianfranco Reverberi's sleazy acid rock kicks in on the soundtrack as the film jumps ahead in time to the early seventies when we see Dr. Lyutak (apparently rehabilitated) at a bar eyeballing a young girl who is looking for a lift to the Kiltsey Club. Sure enough, the girl willingly accepts his offer for a lift, but instead he drives her out to the country where he drowns her in a shallow river. Although a respected doctor, it seems he has a strange fixation with molesting and strangling young women, and as usual this traumatic side-effect of the Vietnam War is never elaborated on. At one point his wife Marcia (Rita Calderoni) finds out he is suffering from these insane obsessions. Shocked at first, she eventually consoles him by making love to him (?) which gives Polselli yet another reason to show more nudity. It's quite obvious Dr. Lyutak's guilt is blatant, but his close involvement in the investigation leaves him above suspicion from Inspector Edwards (Raoul), who by the way looks more like a

small time hustler than a detective. Very simplistic in its execution, the film is rather bland in between the many bursts of violence and nudity, but he patient as it does offer some rewarding twists towards the end.

Despite its amateurish look and lackluster script, Polselli's film actually remains rather entertaining because the film doesn't pretend to be anything more than it is, a gratuitous sex thriller. Unlike Polselli's earlier horror films which only touched upon the underlying sexual brutality, *DELIRIUM* on the other hand exploits this aspect in spades. Scenes of Hargitay strangling half naked women with apparent glee tend to go on much longer than necessary, which shows Polselli merely has a perfunctory interest in the actual story itself. Instead he focuses his attention on the sleazy murder

sequences some of which are quite effective. For the most part though, Polselli's direction is poor and uninspired, which is especially evident during the many police procedural scenes.

Virtually unknown to US audiences, this film was shot back to back with Polselli's own *THE REINCARNATION OF ISABEL* ("RITI MAGI NERE/THE GHASTLY ORGIES OF COUNT DRACULA") which also starred Hargitay and Calderoni. Interestingly enough a 1977 US production with the same name, directed by Peter Maris, also centers around an unstable Vietnam vet who goes on a killing spree which involves mostly young women! On a final note, *DELIRIUM* is obviously flawed in its conception but altogether it's fairly satisfying Eurotrash film making.



DELIRIUM

THE FIGHTING FIST OF SHANGHAI JOE

(1973)

Directed by Mario Caiano
Reviewed by Robert Monell

By 1973, the year this bloody martial-arts western was released, Italian westerns had already lost much of their appeal for the action-adventure fans who had been supporting the genre since Leone's seminal *A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS* appeared in 1964. *SHANGHAI JOE* is a superior, if obscure, example of a sub-genre—the eastern-western—which briefly attempted to corner the market left after the demise of the more conventional spaghetti western. This mid-70's phenomenon was obviously inspired by the spectacular success of Bruce Lee's karate adventures (*ENTER THE DRAGON*, etc.) which, at that time, were dominating the international action market.

Lee's early death created a James Dean style mystique around him and opened a market for countless imitators. The Chinese production *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH* was also enjoying huge international success, while the Shaw's were producing their own eastern-westerns (Antonio Margheriti's *BLOOD MONEY*/aka *THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER*), which were partially lensed in Hong Kong. It must have seemed logical for the Italian studios to try and cash in on all this interest, but the genre never really caught on with audiences and quietly disappeared. Those who were interested in karate masters wandering the old west could always stay home and catch David Carradine in *KUNG FU*.

THE FIGHTING FIST OF SHANGHAI JOE seems, in retrospect, to be the among the best of this short lived phenomenon. It is more intelligent, entertaining, and stylish than either the rather crude *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH* or the terminally silly *BLOOD MONEY*. The story begins in 1882 San Francisco as the unassuming protagonist (Chen

Lee), arrives in the U.S. in search of a job and a more dignified life. He finds neither, only an exploitative wasteland populated by racists, pornographers, slave-traders, and assorted sadists. The film has an abrupt, episodic structure following Joe's face-offs with a series of fearsome killers hired by a corrupt rancher whom the immigrant has offended.

Director/co-screenwriter, Mario Caiano seems intent on showing a bleak, almost surrealistic portrait of the American west. The whole point of this film is that the American dream has been subtly compromised by racism, slave trading and greed. Joe finally rides into an uncertain future, somewhat embittered by his experiences, but still intent on using his martial arts skills in the cause of justice. He has defeated his foes but the endemic social evils he has discovered still exist.

What really stands out in this film is its totally negative depiction of 19th century Americans. Even Leone's villainous protagonists would sometimes succumb to a brief encounter with pity or human decency. Virtually every American depicted here, from the local ranch hands to the territorial sheriff are violent, xenophobic short change artists. Only Lee's deceptively gentle persona offers any possibility of sympathy or audience identification.

The screenplay's ultra-cynical overview and the cartoonish way-over-the-top depiction of evil makes even Sergio Leone's caustic vision of the west seem benign in comparison. Caiano's western is reminiscent of the incendiary, almost Marxist, screenplays of Franco Solinas, who penned such political Westerns as Corbucci's *THE MERCENARY* (in the comic vein), and the Brando/Pontecorvo mega-bomb *BURN!*.

SHANGHAI JOE, though, is never pretentious about its socio-political subtext. Instead, under Caiano's opulent, rapid-fire direction the film moves at a furious pace through a series of increasingly bizarre and gory showdowns. The film's hyperkinetic pulse is also fueled by another glorious Bruno

Nicolai score, featuring blaring trumpets and simulated Morricone-style bird calls. Caiano has always been among the most underrated of the 60's and 70's Italian genre directors. His carefully crafted films range from the Golden Age classic *NIGHT-MARE CASTLE* (1965)—easily the equal of *Freda*'s and *Bava*'s *Barbara Steele* gothics—to *NAZI LOVE CAMP NO. 27*, a hard-core Nazi-atrocity shocker which is redeemed by Caiano's delirious patterning of vivid colors and elegant staging of the most appalling S&M horrors this side of the *Ilse* series.

The acting in this film is also markedly superior to most other examples of this genre. Chen Lee was probably the most fascinating of the Bruce Lee clones. Bruce garnered his appeal from his boyish bravado, easy-going charm and bell-bent fighting style. Chen is totally different. While not as photogenic or as athletically talented as Bruce, he immediately engages interest with a more mature mixture of a withdrawn, mystical quality and a deliberate, sometimes surrealistically sleepkick style of combat in which he employs a yo-yo, plates, knives, and an eye-gouging, stomach-ripping thrust which quickly reduces opponents to a mass of quivering pulp.

The supporting cast alone is worth the price of this tape. All of Joe's opponents are played by such Euro-cult actors as Klaus Kinski, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart, Gordon Mitchell and Piero Lulli. The late, great Kinski is especially effective as an off-the-wall hired killer named Scalper Jack (1), who enjoys torturing and skinning alive his victims before removing their scalps. As usual, Kinski approaches this role in the exact opposite way most actors would. He plays the sadist as an effeminate, almost childlike, creature who seems to take deep sexual gratification from his bloody work. It is also interesting to see Stuart, the square-jawed hero of so many mid-60's Italian science fiction epics (as Jack Stuart), play a charming poker-hustler who, in the film's most violent scene, manages to get his eyes graphically gouged out.

THE THIEF OF CRIMES

(Fr-It 1968)

Directed by Nadine
Trintignant

Reviewed by Marc Giguère

For those of you fascinated with death obsessed psychological French films here's a winner. This is an obscure film from the late sixties, a bleak, nihilistic little number that would make Camus or Sartre proud. Since it is a predominantly French film (despite it being an Italian Co-production), it is naturally wordy & has little to offer in on-screen explicitness. This should not however, be a deterrent to the enjoyment of this interesting sleazy little thriller. Jean-Louis Trintignant is in fine form here at the height of his Euro-trash period (**DEATH LAID AN EGG & THE BIG SILENCE** to name a few). From the opening credits, we see him gleefully manacled, lifting his arms in triumph like a peacock as he's being escorted by a few gendarmes through a crowd of paparazzi. We cut to a woman, awakened by a call. She disappears for a drive in the country, parks along the side of the road, fastens ropes around her body; a hapless Jean walks alongside the road and observes her strange behavior. She gives him a casual glance and proceeds to drive her vehicle off the cliff.

Jean reads about the mysterious death the next day, discusses it with his friend Étienne, and decides to rent Étienne's brother's apartment where he meets a curious woman that stirs his emotions. She is Florinda (Florinda Bolkan), a free spirit, with whom he develops a bizarre complex relationship. Jean becomes obsessed by the suicide of this woman. He is a doctor, he is a writer, he is a celebrity (in his

own mind naturally), he is a loser and a loner, yet an important cog in society's wheel. He doesn't want respect or servility. He has decided to become the murderer of the suicide victim. He then starts writing letters to the local gendarme claiming to have committed a random, gratuitous, senseless act. In this new room, he creates a death shrine, collecting the articles sent in by the murderer, covering them in blood, pointing imaginary guns to his head, and attempting auto-strangulation. He imagines the court proceedings as they should turn out. Throughout most of the movie Jean & his friends discuss the murder and attempt to ponder the futility of man. Eventually the letters sent in by Jean are no longer getting front page attention.

This distresses him, it is an affront to his megalomania. He realizes that society is indifferent. He has left his work, his wife & children for his love of death. He realizes that he must dedicate himself to his cause, rekindling the attention that has deserted him. He follows a woman and steals her purse, only to be pursued by two men. She has decided, to his dismay, not to press charges. He wanders aimlessly only to locate a child. He claims to be a school inspector & abducts the child. He steals a car. They stop, he buys the boy an ice cream cone only to find out he has been locked out of the car by the child. He ends up breaking the window of the vehicle and the child runs off toward the ice cream man, another apathetic soul who refuses to turn in Jean. He runs into Florinda who has tried to seduce him on several occasions. They drive off into the woods, he fastens her to the car with rope. She is turned on, Jean wants no part of her. He drives her off the cliff and has come full circle. There is nothing left for Jean to do

but confess his crime once more, this time with a direct appearance rather than a letter.

Who knows, maybe Jorg Buttgerit was influenced by this film before lensing his **DER TODESKING**. Although this film is not overly graphic, its psychological portrait of a man suffering from dementia praecox is often fascinating. It is clearly a film of its period. The set pieces and the music lend this film a cool look. The dark mood is often injected by the extraordinary score, courtesy of David Axelrod, who at the time was a member of the terrific US psychedelic band *The Electric Prunes*. Axelrod stayed with the Prunes long enough to record two albums (both in 1968): *Release of an Oath* and the extraordinary *Mass in F Minor* from which most of this score seems to have been culled. In fact, most of that album's standout cuts are excerpted including *Kyrie Elieson* (also used in the Dennis Hopper classic *EASY RIDER*) & *Sanctus*.

Although I have never found Florinda Bolkan to be overly beautiful, she has always reminded me of an even nastier, colder looking Mary Woronov (whom I do find appealing), here, in what the credits claim to be her debut performance, she is quite seductive & captivating. Maybe it's all those cool sixties mini-skirts, maybe it's her seduction dance, maybe it's seeing her perverse smile. This one also features the breathtaking Bernadette Lafont (star of a number of French bedroom farces, a number of Truffaut films & the terrific Nésa Kaplan film *LA FIANCÉE DU PIRATE* best known in North America as *A VERY CURIOUS GIRL*) in a small part as the maid. The direction, courtesy of Jean-Louis' wife, Nadine, is quite solid. This is a fine little film and strongly recommended.

Marc Giguère lives in Canada.

SERGIO SOLLIMA PLAYS COWBOYS AND POLITICS



FACE TO FACE

THE BIG GUNDOWN was a resounding box office success in both Europe and the United States, where it was marketed with a huge picture of Lee Van Cleef and the ad line, "Mister Ugly comes to town!" (apparently forgetting Van Cleef played "The Bad" in Leone's hit film). Sollima had carte blanc to do anything he wanted, as long as it was a western. The result was **FACE TO FACE**, one of the most original and offbeat films the genre ever produced, and one of the best. This truly weird opus tells the story of Brad Fletcher an Eastern school teacher played by Gian Maria Volonté (**FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE, A BULLET FOR THE GENERAL**). Ill with tuberculosis, Fletcher goes west for his health and is captured by a bandit named Beaugard Bennett (Tomas Milian). Fletcher helps to save Bennett's life and the latter cannot bring himself to kill him. Instead, the formerly peaceful, intellectual school teacher joins Bennett's gang and soon reveals a talent for killing and planning robberies. Fletcher's ego and ruthlessness

grow, even as Bennett slowly reveals a kinder and gentler side to his personality. It's as if these men are exchanging their characters, except that while Bennett was a wild and free anarchist, Fletcher, with his innate feeling of intellectual superiority, becomes a raving fascist. Fletcher takes over Bennett's gang, The Savage Pack, and leads it to disaster. In the end, a showdown comes between the two men, and Bennett is forced to kill Fletcher against his will. An especially effective fade-out has an understanding lawman (William Berger) passing off a mutilated corpse as Beaugard Bennett and letting the real outlaw go free, because, "Beaugard Bennett is dead." A note should be made here about Sollima and his idea of what constitutes a proper name for a character. It is clear from the film itself that Milian is either part Mexican or part Indian, since Bennett is referred to at one point as a "half breed." Perhaps he is both, but he sure isn't someone named "Beaugard Bennett"! "Beaugard Bennett" is the name of a character often played by George

Brent in **GONE WITH THE WIND** ripoffs from the 1940s, set in the old south. He is usually married to a woman named Magnolia, but screwing Bette Davis on the side.

Sharp eyed film fans will recognize **FACE TO FACE** as a western variation on Ingmar Bergman's arthouse flick, **PERSONA** with Liv Ullmann and Bibi Andersson. Sollima's film is far more exciting and interesting than Bergman's, in every way (okay, so I'll admit Bibi Andersson has a better ass than Volonte, but in every other way I like Sollima's film better). Once again, Ennio Morricone provides a score that perfectly mirrors the action, alternately violent and lyrical. Milian and Volonte work smoothly together, despite rumors of trouble on the set between the two actors. Apparently, Volonte's self-important, extremely serious way of working clashed with Milian's looser, more improvisational style. The results are certainly splendid, no matter how much difficulty Sollima had in achieving them. Milian, with thick, black matted hair down to his shoulders, perfectly captures this wild, violent, natural man who undergoes a crisis of conscience (especially difficult, since he didn't know he had one). In some ways, Milian has the more difficult role, since he must make Bennett's rehabilitation believable. Volonte is especially brilliant at conveying Fletcher's growing egotism and ruthlessness. William Berger gives his usual relaxed, effective performance as Pinkerton Agent Charles Siringo, who infiltrates the gang and in the end lets Bennett go. Since the part seems further from his real personality than the quasi-hippie "Banjo" in **SABATA** the results are even more impressive.

Once again, the politics of **FACE TO FACE**, with its parable of anarchy and fascism, propel the action forward rather than slow it down. It is one of Sollima's best, although it didn't make much of an impression on Italian critics or moviegoers in 1967.

Ambitious for another success to cement his reputation, Sollima returned to the character of Cuchillo Sanchez,

the lovable scoundrel who is a wizard with knife. **RUN MAN, RUN!** (**CORRI, UOMO, CORRI!**) (68) is often dismissed as a simple, inferior rehash of **THE BIG GUNDOWN**. Although it does use elements from the earlier film, Sollima has subtly altered them to give the sequel its own mood and pace. One important difference is that while **THE BIG GUNDOWN** concerned itself mostly with the plight of Jonathan Corbett (Van Cleef), **RUN MAN, RUN!** puts Cuchillo (Milian) squarely in the center of things. For a director like Sollima, who preaches third world revolution, this is an important step forward. For the first time in his work, the third world character is definitely the hero. And, since Cuchillo is a looser and more amusing character than Corbett, so is this film looser and more comic than its predecessor. In fact, much of **RUN MAN, RUN!** has a satirical edge, and Milian's performance looks forward to his even greater success a decade later in comedies like **THE SAMURAI KID** and **CRIME IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT** (speaking of Politically Incorrect, catch Milian's hilarious but insulting comic Asians in these two items, which rank with Jerry Lewis's Kabuki routine in **THE BIG MOUTH** for tastelessness).

Unable to compete with **THE BIG GUNDOWN** in scope or budget, Sollima, who also produced this one, wisely keeps things fast moving and filled with action. Cuchillo has now been transformed from the bitter, disillusioned thief of **THE BIG GUNDOWN** into a somewhat reluctant hero of the Mexican Revolution. Irish actor Donald O'Brien has a role similar to Van Cleef's in the earlier film, but significantly his character is an ex-revolutionary who has turned against his old cohorts and now hunts them down. In the end, O'Brien's new dedication to the cause makes an interesting contrast to Cuchillo's. Wisely, the Irish actor doesn't try to compete with Van Cleef's charisma and star quality, but he manages to project a grizzled authority nonetheless. In another strange example of Sollima's problem with

names, John Ireland, who looks as Irish as a bottled ham, portrays a Mexican named "Sanstilla." He manages to bring it off, but it's a touch and go there for a while. In keeping with the film's reduced scope, **RUN MAN, RUN!** is scored not by Morricone, but by his usual arranger and conductor, Bruno Nicolai. The musical results are very good nonetheless, with Milian wurling the title song with an entertaining bonesty. While **RUN MAN, RUN!** isn't on the same level as **THE BIG GUNDOWN** or **FACE TO FACE**, it's a very enjoyable film nonetheless and deserves

VIOLENT CITY



CITTA' VIOLENTA

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Company, 10000 Wilshire Blvd., Suite
1000, Beverly Hills, CA 90210
ENC 10000 U.S.A. 10000 U.S.A.

to be seen.

With his notable success in the Spaghetti Western genre, one would have assumed that Sollima would continue on mining the same vein. When it was announced that he would direct Charles Bronson and Telly Savalas in a film titled **THE FINAL SHOT (ULTIMO COLPO)**, it was erroneously assumed that it would be a western as well. This was proved incorrect, and **VIOLENT CITY (CITTA' VIOLENTA)** (70) as the film was finally called, turned out to be a hard hitting gangster film with a few nods to John Boorman's classic 1967 thriller, **POINT BLANK**. Charles Bronson is well cast as lone wolf assassin Jeff Heston, who gets out of jail with revenge on his mind. The woman he loved and was betrayed by, Vanessa (Bronson's wife, Jill Ireland) is now a famous media celebrity as well as the wife of a powerful, older gangster (Telly Savalas). This crime boss wants Heston to join his organization, but the latter refuses. This sets off a series of double crosses and action scenes that continue throughout **VIOLENT CITY** and gives it an enviable punch. Sollima's political themes appear in disguised form here, as crime is shown to be just another facet of "big business," and Heston's individualism is considered outdated and outmoded. The late Jill Ireland, who usually took on supporting roles in Bronson vehicles like **RIDER ON THE RAIN** and **BREAKHART PASS**, has her best role ever as the scheming, cold blooded Vanessa. Some biographies have uncharitably quoted intimates of the married couple as claiming that this character in fact quite close to Ms. Ireland's real personality, but that can probably be dismissed as idle gossip (notice I mentioned it anyway). Morricone provides another outstanding, pulse pounding score, and Sollima once again manages to slip a few bars of his favorite classical piece, Beethoven's "Für Elise" into the proceedings, as he did in **THE BIG GUNDOWN** and later in **A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN**.

Back in the modern world after three westerns, nothing much has changed for Sollima. The hero, or more appropriately the anti-hero, is still forever on the run, betrayed by both the system he trusted (the syndicate) and those around him. Although Polish by ancestry, there is definitely something third world about Bronson's physical appearance, as Andrew Sarris had already observed in connection with **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST**. This almost Latino look serves to make Bronson's character even more of an outcast in the whitebread world of the Southern United States, where the film takes place. Ironically, Bronson himself has virtually disowned the films made during his phase as a European star (early 70s), preferring to be remembered for his post-**DEATH WISH** work (if you can believe that). In fact, **VIOLENT CITY** is one of his best films and his magnetic performance is expertly guided by his director. **VIOLENT CITY** was eventually released in the USA under the title of **THE FAMILY** to cash in on the post-GODFATHER gangster craze. It is a blunt, effective work, filled with Sollima's usual striking set pieces and chases.

Growing a bit bored with action movies, Sollima looked for something that would be a little more offbeat. It wasn't until 1972 that he found it, with the eerie psychological melodrama, **A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN (IL DIAVOLO NEL CERVELLO)**. Stephanie Sandrelli stars as a mysterious young woman who lives in seclusion, and Kier Dullea is the man determined to discover her secret. I don't want to give away too much about this disturbing work, but it is a most fascinating change of pace for this accomplished director. Sandrelli is especially good, and Dullea is well cast, since he had appeared in such other offbeat films as **DAVID AND LISA** and Otto Preminger's **BUNNY LAKE IS MISSING** to equal effect. One of the many mysteries the film poses is why Dullea has more eyeshadow on than an Egyptian Pharaoh. **A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN** was not a box office success, but aided by Morricone's interesting score, Sollima got very good results. Ironically, the director blamed the producers for the film's failure, saying they sold it like a typical "giallo" of the period. Actually, one wonders what Sollima expected since that was virtually the only way to make a little money on the enterprise.

Unperturbed by the low grosses for **A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN**, Sollima embarked on his most uncompromising film ever, **REVOLVER**, in 1973. This was an openly political crime thriller, with its plot taken from the headlines of the period (the possible conspiracy to murder oil tycoon Enrico Mattei). This film is virtually a modern, cynical remake of **THE BIG GUNDOWN**. Oliver Reed is the warden of a maximum security Italian prison, who discovers his sexy young wife (Agostina Belli in a nice nude interlude) has been kidnapped. The criminals behind the crime want him to release one of the inmates (Italian star Fabio Testi) and make an exchange for his wife. It isn't until the kidnappers unsuccessfully try to kill Testi that Reed realizes things aren't as simple as he thought. It's obvious this inmate knows something that some very powerful people want to keep a secret forever. The problem is, Testi doesn't know what it is. Thus, like Van Cleef and Milian in **THE BIG GUNDOWN**, Reed and Testi must join forces to discover the truth and save Reed's wife.

This isn't the old west, however, and Sollima is not longer as optimistic about the possibility of revolution as he once was. It becomes apparent that these two men have no chance whatsoever of bringing down the politically powerful forces at the top of this enigma. Indeed, they may never even really understand the reason they are marked for death. As a vicious criminal tells a beaten Reed at one point, "The men behind me have the power to crush you and everything you represent for a thousand years." In the shocking ending, Reed gives up Testi and allows him to be killed, in exchange for his wife. The final shot shows us that his marriage will never be the same again.

To compensate for its despairing message, **REVOLVER** is filled with suspenseful chases, as the two men race against time to find out the truth. Morricone's

music pounds the film's message home with shotgun impact, becoming sadder and more lyrical at times to highlight the tragedy to come. This is Sollima's most intense and extreme film, and one of his best. It's as if he was ready now to film Sollima's original ending to **THE BIG GUNDOWN** and damn the consequences. Interestingly, Sollima once again criticized the casting of the lead actor in interviews. The director had originally wanted French star Lino Ventura for the part of the Warden. A great actor, Ventura is too tough and in control for the part. Rood, more passionate and mercurial, fits the warden's personality like a glove and he acquits himself well. Testi once again shows why he became a good all purpose leading man in the 70s, and has one of his best roles here. **REVOLVER** was eventually released in the U.S. under the title of **BLOOD IN THE STREETS** on home video. The lack of commercial success for this big budget thriller caused the usually deliberate Sollima to become even more finicky about his next project. It wasn't until 1976 that his next film was released. Actually, the word "released" isn't quite right, though it was eventually shown in theaters.

SANDOKAN was a mini-series for Italian Television, based on the pulp adventure novels of Emilio Salgari. Salgari might best be described as an Italian combination of Karl May and Rudyard Kipling, spinning exotic adventure tales set in India and Ceylon. Previously, during the peplum boom of the early 60s, Ray Danton had played the Indian hero in films like **SANDOKAN AND THE LEOPARD OF SARAWAK**, but these made little or no impact. Sollima undertook this massive project, and was happy for the first time in years. He gave the series his usual political edge, turning Sandokan himself from merely a romantic brigand and swashbuckler, into a revolutionary hero involved in an insurrection against the British. Once again, Sollima managed to convince the producers to forgo an Italian star in dusky makeup, and signed an actual Indian actor for the leading role. Tall, handsome Kabir Bedi paid Sollima back by turning a fine performance and becoming an international star for a while. Bedi's career peaked with appearance in the James Bond thriller **OCTOPUSSY** and the American TV hit, **DYNASTY**, but it is as Sandokan that he will always be remembered by international audiences. The production was lush, and the action well observed. Sollima, however, was probably forced by the pressures of turning out a lot of footage in a limited amount of time to use a simpler, less complex style than usual. As a result, **SANDOKAN** is good entertainment, but not prime Sollima. The mini-series, however, was a bonafide smash in Italy, the highest rated of the season. A feature film with the same title, culled from the series, was also a smash at the box office. Before you ask how Italian audiences could be so dumb as to pay for what they had already gotten for free, it should be pointed out that for big mini-series like **SANDOKAN**, two separate scripts are written, one for the series and one for a two hour feature. Although the feature does use scenes from the series, it

also has segments never shown on Television. In this way both the TV and Theatrical version are entities valid unto themselves. We're not talking her about something like those **MAN FROM UNCLE** features released to American theaters in the 60s, which had only a few extra minutes to pad out their running time. Ably supported by such stalwarts as Adolfo Celi as "Rajah Brooke," Bedi and **SANDOKAN** were a big success.

Sollima quickly undertook to capitalize on his star and series by shooting another exotic swashbuckler, this time exclusively for the big screen. **THE BLACK PIRATE** starred Bedi as the buccaneer of the title, the leader of a band of pirates who are also (big surprise) rebels against an oppressive king. Mel Ferrer was thrown into the mix for the international audience, and like **SANDOKAN** the music was provided by the then hot musical duo of Guido and Maurizio DeAngelis, who aren't exactly Morricone or Nicolai, though they occasionally have their respective moments. Not nearly the success **SANDOKAN** was, **THE BLACK PIRATE** seems like warmed over Sollima, despite some good scenes. A second **SANDOKAN** film was released theatrically the next year, **THE TIGER LIVES AGAIN: SANDOKAN TO THE RESCUE (IL TIGRE VIVA ANCORA: SANDOKAN ALLA RICOSSA)**, but was little seen outside Italy. My assumption is that, like its predecessor, it was principally derived from the series, most probably the later episodes. Anyway, it was also not much of a success at the box office, and slipped from view quickly and quietly.

If the movies were through with Sollima, television was still welcoming him with open arms. Like so many directors in the 1980s, Sollima tilted exclusively for the small screen with mini-series like **I RAGAZZI DI CELLULOID (THE BOYS OF CELLULOID)**, a personal project about young filmmakers which really falls beyond the scope of this article, but which was popular enough to spawn a sequel, brilliantly titled **I RAGAZZI DI CELLULOID II (BOYS OF CELLULOID II)**. Other television works followed, and it isn't until recently that Sollima has been announced as the director of theatrical features again. **TARGET**, a thriller set in pre-World War II Germany, and which was originally titled **BERLIN 39** features such solid but unremarkable actors as Ernest Borgnine and John Savage. Whether it will be for the big screen or end up on television is a matter for the producers to decide. Recently, Sollima has been trying to interest investors in another **SANDOKAN** film, expressly for the big screen, to re-team him with Kabir Bedi. So far, there have been no takers.

It is impossible for anyone who loves Sollima's films to feel that there hasn't been a falling off since the 1970s. For a time, however, he was a powerful political filmmaker who brought his unique vision to westerns and crime thrillers alike. His films are both tremendously entertaining and fairly enlightening. You don't have to agree with his politics to appreciate the movies he made, and that's one of the highest compliments I can think of.

EURO-TRASH COMMENTS

Sorry to hear that you are no longer involved with ATC, but as you wrote in your editorial in ETC #11, it will be for a good cause if you can get ETC published 4 times a year. I've enjoyed each issue of ETC and #11 was no exception. I loved the back page collage featuring some of Franco & Ciccio's adventures.

—Lee Franceschi, FL

Enjoyed the news pertaining to your distribution of Redemption Videos in the US. I hope you will carry Jezebel videos also. As far as the magazine's direction, I enjoy the articles on actresses. Maybe you could do an issue on sexy horror films from Italy during the late 50s and early 60s.

—Richard Toliver, AL

I like the wide open approach for ETC, though what I'm really interested in are seeing more on Euro-NeoNoir, especially French Thrillers. Keep up the good work.

—Mike Handley, CA

I think you should go back to the early "lots of reviews" style. There are many Euro-titles out there (KNIFE OF ICE, DON'T OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE MAN IN BLACK) that I'm interested in, but have no clue to what they're about. Now that Necronomicon and Giallo Pages have gone to a yearly schedule, it looks like your mag is the last hope for us Euro-bounds who need a regular fix. I would like to see detailed filmographies come back too.

—Joe Pardo

Please let it be said I don't listen to my readers, especially when I agree with them! —Craig

Nice job on the long-awaited 11th issue of ETC. I like the mix but have to confess that an all-Horror issue would be right up my alley. Of the contents in this one, I found the piece on Sollina particularly interesting. I'm afraid I have a tendency to obsess on things a bit more baroque than Spaghetti Westerns and Crime films, but I agree with you that the dissemination of film knowledge should be the primary concern (that each issue should be an enjoyable read is a given) of ETC, so I'm willing to also learn about ETC filmmakers who work (or worked) primarily in other than the horror genre. I feel like each reading of ETC is a means of preparing myself for when I can actually afford to buy all of this material. Anyway, as long as ETC keeps on lighting the way, I'll keep renewing my subscription.

—Fred Stansfield, NY

Another fine issue with ETC #11, as always. I particularly enjoyed the interview with Alberto De Martino, not only for his reminiscences about his body of film work, but also for his evaluation of Italian cinema as it stands today. The birth of the videocassette industry truly was both a boon and a curse on movies and Mr. De Martino was succinct and on-target with his analysis. In every issue of ETC there always seems to be something of interest for me in whatever genre you and your contributors write about, though I lean toward the horror, fantasy, and science fiction aspects, I can hardly argue against any expansion of my movie knowledge in any genre, and greatly enjoy the diversity. A narrowed focus would, of course, lead to an issue of exclusive interest to me; the next one, however, might leave me wanting. For instance, I'm not a fan of nor likely to ever see any of the police action films detailed by Alex Tsiknias in his article, but it made for interesting reading nonetheless.

—David Smith, FL

What happened dude? As usual I read the issue from cover to cover and when I finished this one, I found myself saying "What was that all about?" I still don't know. Countless directors, actors and movies I've never heard of. But golly Craig, there's not even any tits on the back cover to fall back on (or fall forward on as the case may be). Here's my prescription: more info and short reviews and less long-winded interviews and analysis, PLEASE! I hope you get ETC back on track as an informative and interesting read.

—Jim McCoy, TX

Another great issue. I love the Fernando Sancho cover—you can never say enough about Tim and Donna Lucas. (You got that right!—Craig) So why does ETC need to take a particular direction? You're doing just great with what ever method it is you're now employing. As it is, I look forward to each issue hoping to be surprised, entertained, and informed. You haven't let me down yet. If it wasn't for ETC's eclectic approach to all forms of Euro-Trash within each early issue, I would never have honed my interest in the Giallos. And without the early exposure to that particular Italian peculiarity, I would have most likely turned up my nose at the all-Giallo issue which turned out to be one of my favorites. You can add my name to Robert Monell's as the other person who actually likes Jess Franco's movies from the eighties.

—Kevin Collins, NY

[Boy, did I catch shit for my smartass comment last issue!] —Craig

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